ELECTION 2006

The Nation.

VIRGINIA'S RUMBLING REBELS

by BOB MOSER

THE MINUTEMEN HIT THE WALL
Marc Cooper

STATE RACES THAT MATTER
John Nichols

THE ECONOMY: THE *OTHER* ISSUE
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FOLEY'S UNDOING
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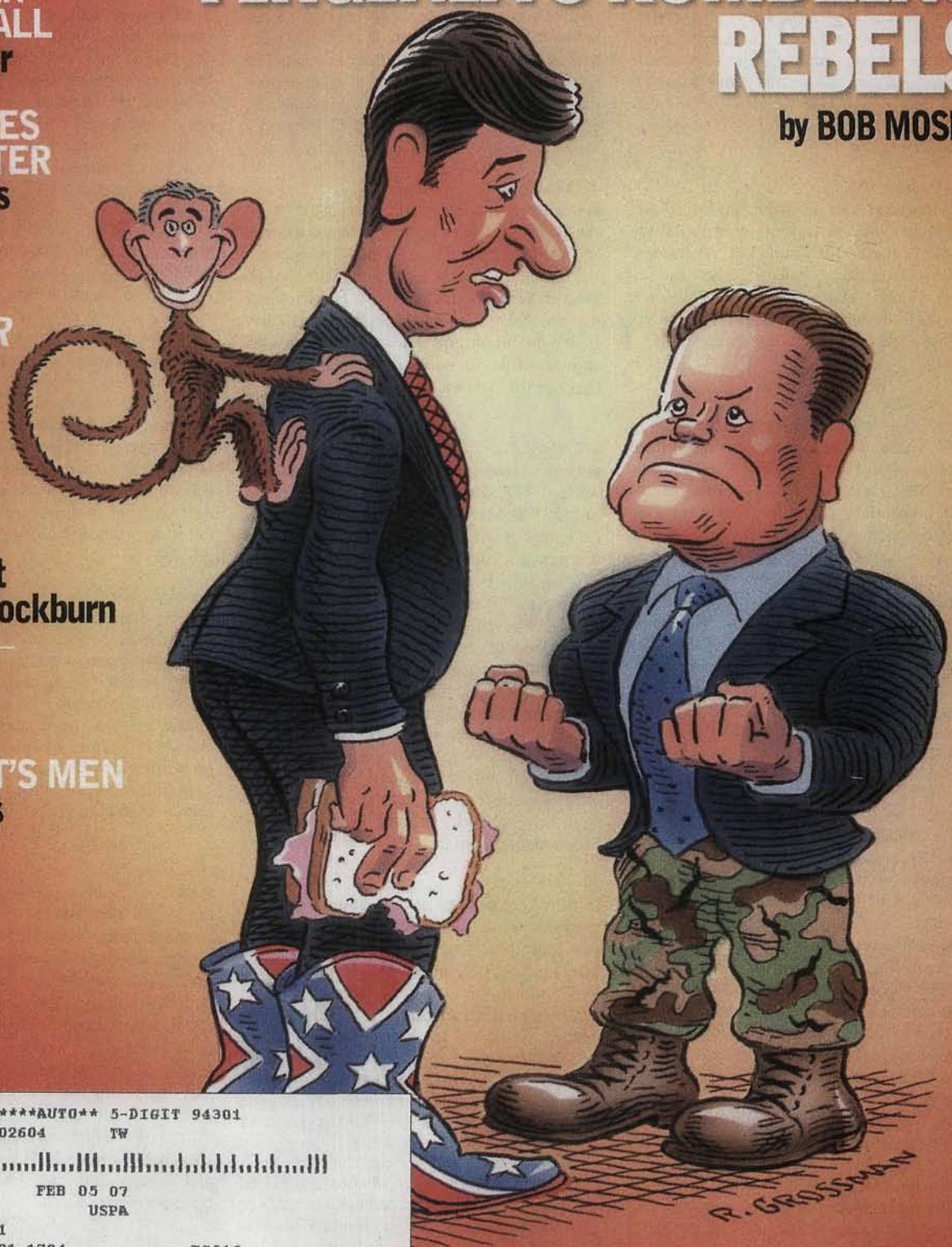

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LETTERS

Letters

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

Food, Glorious Food...

Everyone has an opinion about what they eat, and our first Special Food Issue [Sept. 11] received much mail. Slow-food aficionados, vegetarians, carnivores, vegans, organic gardeners, animal lovers, gourmets, gastronomes and activists wrote to tell us what we did right (a lot) and wrong (a little) and to add to the salad of ideas for the next Special Food Issue. —*The Editors*

State College, Pa.

■ I commend you for publishing the Food Issue. As a longtime *Nation* reader, I found it a refreshing change from your usual "not left enough" idealism, which leaves one feeling angry and impotent. The Food Issue offers readers examples of things to do (and people who do them) that can have a positive impact on everyday life.

MATT JORDAN

Portland, Ore.

■ As co-chair of the board of directors of Slow Food USA and a longtime *Nation* reader, I was especially happy to see the Food Issue. Carlo Petrini, Slow Food's founder, has noted that we are all co-producers; how we spend our food dollars determines who produces our food and what and where food is produced. October 26 to 30 Slow Food will convene Terra Madre in Turin (www.terramadre2006.org/terramadre/welcome.html). This gathering of 5,000 small artisan food producers from around the globe (this year joined by 1,000 chefs and 100 university researchers) posits an alternative to our industrial system of agriculture. The timing seems right for *The Nation* to add food to its regular list of topics and concerns. PETER DE GARMO

Norfolk, Va.

■ There is no more apt expression of "the personal is political" than our food choices, as very well represented in *The Nation*'s first (and, with the editors, we hope not the last) Food Issue. That most Americans eat about forty land animals a year warrants more discussion—especially in a progressive magazine like *The Nation*.

We are a nation of animal lovers (Gallup finds that 96 percent of Americans oppose cruelty to animals), yet the animals Americans eat have their bodies mutilated without pain relief, are given growth-promoting drugs that often cripple them and are cooped up in their own waste for their entire lives. They're slaughtered in ways that are illegal in the European Union. Every stage of the process would warrant felony cruelty charges were dogs or cats so abused. There is no ethical difference between eating a dog or a pig, a chicken or a cat. If anything, eating your dogs or cats would be morally preferable, since they would have led a good life until you killed them. We challenge readers to view www.meat.org. If you oppose cruelty, try vegetarianism. We've got more than 1,500 kitchen-tested recipes, cookbook recommendations, meal plans and more, at www.vegcooking.com. Happy eating! BRUCE G. FRIEDRICH

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals

Bethesda, Md.

■ For the past twenty-four years, World Farm Animals Day (wfad.org) has continued in famed social critic Upton Sinclair's footsteps, exposing the atrocious conditions of animals raised for food in the world's factory farms and slaughterhouses. Folks who eat animals owe them at least a decent life and humane slaughter. They should refuse to patronize a meat industry that cannot meet these minimal standards.

ALEX HERSHAFT

Wheeling, Ill.

■ I believe strongly in the values expressed every week in *The Nation*. I long ago stopped shopping at Wal-Mart. I work in my community to encourage smart growth and create a more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly environment. But reading your Food Issue made me realize just how difficult it is to be a progressive in today's world. I found the issue short on practical advice on how to eat organically and eco-friendly. My family drinks about six gallons of milk each week. The organic milk is almost $3 more per gallon. As someone living from paycheck to paycheck, whose small salary increase was more than offset by increases in the cost of health insurance, I can't keep pace with inflation, let alone pay more to eat healthier and more responsibly. I shudder to think what it's like for people poorer than me. STEVEN BOIME

Corning, Ohio

■ Your Special Issue did not address a highly relevant point: Low-income families cannot purchase these fine foods with food stamps. Here in the Appalachian region of southeastern Ohio, home mini-farms and farmers' markets have been multiplying. It is great that it is occurring in a region that needs all the help it can get. However, low-income families on food stamps cannot shop for these healthy homegrown foods, because farmers' markets can't accept their stamps! KATHLEEN ROBY

San Bernardino, Calif.

■ You do a disservice when you produce a Food Issue but don't point out the health benefits of exclusively eating whole plant foods. *The China Study* by T. Colin Campbell shows the science behind the conclusion that eating only whole plant foods will virtually eliminate most of the diseases that debilitate and kill Americans: heart disease, cancer, diabetes, obesity, autoimmune disease (multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus), osteoporosis, kidney stones and macular degeneration. While some may not be willing to forgo meat, dairy and refined foods (sugar, soft drinks, white bread, white rice, etc.), a significant number would choose this path to a long, healthy life once introduced to the scientific evidence. CRAIG S. JORDAN

Fairfax, Calif.

■ Yes, we need to boycott industrial agriculture (Wendell Berry), improve school lunches (Troy Duster and Elizabeth Ransom), maintain and improve biodiversity (Vandana Shiva), change laws (Eric Schlosser) and so on. But we as individuals cannot make any of these changes happen immediately. What we can do today is follow Peter Singer's advice to become vegetarians or vegans. With our very next meal we can choose not to participate in "the biggest system of cruelty to animals," which is part of our "not ethically defensible system of food production." As a vegan of twenty years' standing, I can put to rest the rumor that this is too radical or too difficult. PATTI BREITMAN

Brooklyn, NY

■ Peter Singer states, "Going vegetarian is a good option, and going vegan, better still." This is not sound advice and is potentially dangerous. Strict vegan diets are deficient in the essential vitamin B12, whose only source in nature, for humans, is animal products. Diets lacking in vitamin B12 can lead to potentially fatal anemia and crippling neurological disease. These complications can be avoided by taking vitamin pills containing vitamin B12.

RONALD F. RIEDER, MD

Albuquerque

■ Isn't our fast-food landscape/culture a product of new pressures on women's time, as well as expectations about their service as earners, shoppers, house managers and, of course, fabulous cooks and clean-up wizards? Shouldn't your smart, progressive writers take women's real lives into account? I have a hard time imagining the average working mom shopping in six places for locally grown organic ingredients and then taking two hours cooking and dining with the family and then enjoying scrubbing the pots. I'm a farmers' market nut and organic gardener, but when I think about women's time and duties and desires, I see the allure of the drive-up window. VIRGINIA SCHARFF

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EDITORIALS

Disgraced Republicans

When House Speaker Dennis Hastert and the Republican Congressional leadership convened a press conference on the last Friday of September, their intent was to spin their record before heading off to the campaign trail. Instead, they found themselves answering questions about their deputy whip, Mark Foley of Florida, who had been sending Do-I-make-you-horny instant messages to Capitol pages. Hastert lamely denied the undeniable: that GOP leaders had known of Foley's creepy communications but had done nothing to protect his teenage targets. Calls for Hastert's resignation soon mounted within the GOP ranks, where strategists worried about what the revelations would do to turnout among the Christian-right faithful. Having abandoned common decency to stay in power, Republicans would happily throw their leader overboard if it would serve that cause.

Hastert's cover-up was in tune with the tawdry scandals and lassitude that characterized the just-completed session. Meeting for fewer than 100 days, the GOP-led Congress failed to pass nine of eleven appropriations bills for the budget year that has already begun. With House majority leader Tom DeLay and Representatives Bob Ney and Randy Cunningham going down under financial scandals, and the K Street Project's organized bribery under investigation, Republicans hit a new nadir—tallying more legislators disgraced than major pieces of legislation passed. Congress never got around to enacting promised laws to clean up its own act. Nor did it fulfill its constitutional mandate to check this lawless Administration—failing, among other things, to investigate the incompetence and corruption in Iraq that is turning a bad war into a catastrophe. How fitting that this Congress spent its last day dogged by new revelations of lobbyist Jack Abramoff's contacts with the Bush White House and the GOP failure to police Mark Foley. If sleaze is still a factor in this polarized time, the outcome of the election should be a foregone conclusion.

But no matter which party prevails in November, Congress will have to return after the election to face its basic responsibilities. That's scary news, since this crowd is even more dangerous when it acts than when it punts. The GOP majority frog-marched through Congress the President's bill to strip detainees of basic rights and rubber-stamp torture after the pious Senator John McCain considered his political future and caved. Its leaders brag about passing an energy bill that lavished billions in subsidies on an oil industry wallowing in record profits. The only action on immigration was to waste $1.2 billion on a 700-mile fence along a 2,000-mile border.

If GOP leaders had gotten their way, they'd have dismantled Social Security, permanently dissolved the estate tax, authorized the President to wiretap Americans without a warrant (or a reason), offered Big Oil more offshore drilling areas and trashed a good deal of what's left of wilderness areas. Now, in the lame-duck session, they'll pass laws that feature corporate payoffs, more tax breaks for the few and cuts in what's left of health, housing and education support for the working poor and the middle class.

Faced with lock-step GOP majorities, Democrats sometimes helped limit the carnage but—as when twelve Senate Dems voted for the torture bill—rolled over too often and fought too little. Indeed, there's more than enough shame to go around.

Republicans, however, have been running the store, and the only question is whether voters are going to hold them to account on November 7. The Republicans have more money for vicious air attacks and a better ground game. But no self-respecting voter can go to the polls thinking that this crowd—its leaders indicted or disgraced, its morals prostituted, its principles bartered away—should be returned to office. Corruption, torture, the fiasco in Iraq and, finally, the Foley cover-up. Enough is enough.

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COMMENT

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Sanctioning Lawlessness

In a decisive 1-0 decision Monday, President Bush voted to grant the president the constitutional power to grant himself additional powers.... Republicans fearful that the president's new power undermines their ability to grant him power have proposed a new law that would allow senators to permit him to grant himself power.

—The Onion, *August 1*

It's so hard to be a satirist these days. When reality outstrips even *The Onion*, what's left for Jon Stewart? This summer, the Supreme Court issued a shot across the bow, decisively repudiating expansive executive authority to try "enemy combatants" in kangaroo courts as a violation of Congressional dictates and the Geneva Conventions. On September 28 Congress rewarded the President's lawlessness by giving him a blank check to do it some more. At the same time, it watered down criminal sanctions against abusive treatment of war prisoners and did everything it could to keep that pesky Supreme Court out of the picture, stripping the courts of jurisdiction. In essence, Congress responded to an executive branch that had thumbed its nose at Congress and the world by joining in. After all, what's more important: America's standing in the world and the rule of law, or partisan advantage in the midterm elections?

Under the rules struck down by the Supreme Court, "enemy combatants" could be tried and executed on the basis of coerced testimony, hearsay and classified evidence that the defendants had no meaningful way to confront. Under the Military Commissions Act, some marginally positive changes were made, but enemy combatants can still be tried and executed on the basis of coerced testimony, hearsay and classified evidence that the defendants have no meaningful way to confront. This time, however, Congress declared that its tribunal rules fully satisfy the Geneva Conventions, as if saying it makes it so. Just to make sure, Congress barred anyone from invoking the Geneva Conventions in court against the government or its officials. Instead of remedying the President's violations of international law, in other words, Congress chose to immunize the lawbreakers.

The new law also paves the way for the CIA to resume its practice of "disappearing" terror suspects into secret "black sites" and subjecting them to harsh interrogation tactics, including depriving them of sleep, forcing them to stand naked for long periods in frigidly cold rooms while periodically dousing them with cold water, and God knows what else. Senator John McCain, with his Republican colleagues Lindsey Graham and John Warner, made a big show of standing up to the Administration on this issue, but in the end it was little more than show. McCain has boasted that the new law prohibits torture and cruel and inhuman treatment of detainees. But federal law already made all such conduct a war crime. The new law actually weakens restrictions on abusive interrogations by narrowing what amounts to a war crime.

Taking a page from John Yoo, the author of the Justice Department's original torture memo, Congress has tortured language in order to clear room for the CIA to torture suspects. Just

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COMMENT

as Yoo interpreted the criminal torture ban narrowly so as to permit threats of death and infliction of any physical pain short of that associated with organ failure or death, so the new law makes it a crime to inflict "serious physical pain" on detainees, but defines "serious physical pain" as requiring both bodily injury and "extreme" physical pain, which sounds even more harsh than the "severe" physical pain that constitutes torture. McCain has trumpeted this law as a compromise—but the only thing it compromises is our commitment to the fundamental dignity of all human beings.

The law also neatly redefines the term "unlawful enemy combatant" in entirely circular terms, as anyone who "has been determined to be an unlawful enemy combatant" by a "competent tribunal" established by the President. Under this definition, if a military tribunal were to declare Kofi Annan an enemy combatant, he would be, because the law does not require that the person meet any objective criteria for the designation.

The new statute also radically restricts habeas corpus review, the traditional avenue for the imprisoned to challenge in court the legality of their detention. It also retroactively strips jurisdiction over all the Guantánamo cases now pending in the courts. Detainees are relegated to sharply limited review in the DC Circuit, which can only review the legal sufficiency of a Combatant Status Review Tribunal finding. Since the "enemy combatant" definition described above makes the tribunal's finding conclusive, however, this review is meaningless. If anyone whom the tribunal says is an enemy combatant thereby is one, there will be nothing for the DC Circuit to review. Moreover, the bar on habeas review means that suspects being tortured or otherwise abused have no recourse to the courts to challenge their treatment.

Finally, and perhaps most disturbing, these provisions for the most part apply only to foreign nationals accused of terrorist crimes and fighting for the enemy. There is no constitutional bar on trying citizens in military tribunals—so long as the tribunals meet fundamental demands of fairness. We did it as recently as World War II, and the Supreme Court upheld the practice. But as the Bush Administration knows, it's much easier to sell abusive power politically if one can assure citizens that *their* rights are not at stake.

In the end, even though Congress has done its best to give the President unfettered authority and to preclude judicial review, this law will be judged, first, by the Supreme Court, which is not likely to accept such grave inroads on the rule of law or its own power, and, more important, by the world at large. That is the community before which we will need to defend ourselves if we send Guantánamo detainees, even those who are admittedly "the worst of the worst," to their death through trials that fail to meet basic guarantees of fairness, preclude meaningful judicial review and allow the use of coercive interrogation. We are losing on the battlefield of world opinion. The Supreme Court's decision this past summer gave us a chance to turn the tide, but all too characteristically the political branches have squandered the opportunity.

DAVID COLE

David Cole (cole@law.georgetown.edu), The Nation's legal affairs correspondent, is a professor at Georgetown University Law Center.

Woodward, Revised

Bob Woodward is late to the party. With his new book, *State of Denial*, he catches up with recent history—big time. As part of the PR blitz for the third of his Bush-at-war chronicles, Woodward appeared on *60 Minutes* and summed up the book thus: "It is the oldest story in the coverage of government: the failure to tell the truth." But other journalists were on to that story for years while Woodward was producing books that shied away from such a confrontational conclusion, although his earlier accounts did include negative information about the President and his aides. (Interest declared: The book I wrote with Michael Isikoff, *Hubris: The Inside Story of Spin, Scandal, and the Selling of the Iraq War*, has been competing for attention during the Woodward tsunami.)

Woodward has slammed his Bigfoot brand name on a notion that's not new: George W. Bush has not been honest with the public. Woodward's last book, *Plan of Attack*—chock-full of fly-on-the-wall reporting—missed this story as Woodward zeroed in on the palace infighting and neglected the Administration's use of flimsy and fraudulent intelligence to rally support for the Iraq invasion. (Before the war, Woodward declared on CNN that "the intelligence shows...there are massive amounts" of WMDs "hidden, buried, unaccounted for" in Iraq.) This time around, he hurls one tale after another at the reader to make the grand point that Bush and his aides have pushed happy-talk about Iraq in public when the real skinny—the intelligence reports, the military assessments—was grounds for despair.

The core narrative is simple: Donald Rumsfeld is a jerk and has ruined the Iraq War. He is the villain of the piece: distrustful, arrogant, indecisive, possessed of a short attention span and micro-managing—make that micro-mismanaging—everything. He wants the power; he shirks the responsibility. He (with help) screwed up the postinvasion planning and ignored warnings from subordinates that he was doing so. He wouldn't return National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice's phone calls. He refused to recognize that there were not enough troops in Iraq. Even Paul Wolfowitz, his number two at the Pentagon, got into the act. Woodward notes that Wolfowitz could not compel Rumsfeld to focus on key issues like training Iraqi security forces.

Iraq is a mess—and it's as if Woodward and his sources decided there was something on which they could all agree: Rummy, described in rosier terms in earlier Woodward books, is the one to blame. Bush and Dick Cheney—though not portrayed in a positive light—are not roughed up nearly as much as the Pentagon chief. But who's in charge?

Along the way, Woodward drops intriguing nuggets. When Bush started pondering a presidential run, in 1997, one of the

ON THE WEB: Ken Miller on a progressive alternative to Bush's "war on terror." Nicholas von Hoffman on gas pump politics. John Cavanagh & Sarah Anderson explore ten ways to disprove the Wal-Mart pundits (www.thenation.com).

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COMMENT

first people he talked with was Prince Bandar bin Sultan, Saudi Arabia's US Ambassador. He told the Saudi, "I don't have the foggiest idea about what I think about international, foreign policy." Rumsfeld turned Gen. Richard Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, into a broken man who took to scratching his arms compulsively. When retired Gen. Jay Garner, tapped by the Pentagon to lead the postinvasion reconstruction effort, told Bush his small office could not handle four of its nine assignments (including reshaping the Iraqi military), Bush barely responded. As Bush campaigned for President in 2004, the National Security Council's coordinator for Iraq, Robert Blackwill, traveled with him, but Bush never asked him what was happening there. Bush and Karl Rove enjoyed fart jokes.

In some instances, Woodward might be overdramatizing. He reports that at a July 10, 2001, meeting, CIA Director George Tenet and an aide briefed Rice on intelligence indicating Al Qaeda was planning something big, but Rice gave them the brush-off. This makes it seem that Rice was out to lunch. But a former intelligence official familiar with the meeting told me that Tenet did not see Rice's response as a dismissal. "Woodward's hyping," the source said. Nevertheless, there's enough material in the book to support an old-news idea: Before the war Bush didn't think through his Iraq project; after the invasion he was unable to lead a dysfunctional Administration through the ugly problems he had created. Bush resorted to denial. In private, he ordered his aides not to call the conflict an "insurgency." In public, he claimed progress when classified reports were saying the opposite.

Detractors wonder why it's taken Woodward so long to focus on the Administration's obvious troubles with candor and competence. Woodward insists he always calls it as he reports it—*not* that he has tacked with anti-Bush winds. But compare the final pages of the last two books of his trilogy. In each, he quotes passages from his interview with Bush in late 2003. In *Plan of Attack*, he reprinted a portion that illustrated "Bush's conviction that he made the right decision." He noted the President told him he was "fully prepared to live with it" if the Iraq War cost him re-election. At the end of that book, Bush came across as resolute. In *State of Denial*, Woodward has Bush in this same interview resisting an acknowledgment that WMDs were not found in Iraq. He included these statements in *Plan of Attack*, but in the new book he now cites them as evidence of Bush's "habit of denial." Despite all his insider access, Woodward did not report that denial until it could no longer be denied.

DAVID CORN

CALVIN TRILLIN

We Got Those Wall-To-Wall 24/7 Damage-Control Blues

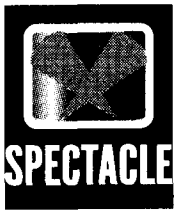
(Sung by Dan Bartlett and Tony Snow, "The Blues Brothers of the Right")

They leaked that NIE that said Iraq's
Producing terrorists and such in stacks,
So even winning sort of means to lose.
We got those wall-to-wall 24/7 damage-control blues.

Then Woodward writes that Bush is bubble boy—
As clueless as those dudes defending Troy—
And Rumsfeld is a Queeg with shortened fuse.
We got those wall-to-wall 24/7 damage-control blues.

Then Foley's creepy messages appear,
And Dennis Hastert's known for a year,
So can't claim he and Boehner had no clues.
Iraq each day brings worse, more violent news.
George Allen's *zayde* and his wife were Jews,
But, still, the n-word George was prone to use
Was hardly "nebbish," and so folks accuse
Poor George of having harbored racist views.
If we can't find some gays to bash, we'll lose.
This stuff could drive the boss man back to booze.
We got those wall-to-wall 24/7 damage-control blues.

Death Trip



I'll bet my first edition of *Portnoy's Complaint* that when finalists for the National Book Awards are announced October 11, Philip Roth's latest novel, *Everyman*, will be up for the fiction prize. This account of an old man's journey toward death was a literary event this year, and not just because of its considerable power. The Grim Reaper was much on the minds of serious writers and their readers in 2005. Joan Didion's memoir *The Year of Magical Thinking*, which describes the grief that flowed from her husband's fatal heart attack and her daughter's struggle with illness, had won the NBA prize for nonfiction. (It's now headed for Broadway.)

The virtue of both these books is their refusal to gild the grief of dying with any higher purpose. But this unsparing candor leads to a self-enclosure that fits all too neatly into the culture now. It's not surprising that two of our most important writers are telling us that death is an insular experience that transcends social circumstance. This ultimately conservative message is part of the same process that has put self-obsession front and center in American politics.

We expect great writers to stand against the tide, as Didion and Roth once did. Their best work is broadly dissident, and they've always written with acuity about class and caste. But death seems to have eclipsed their awareness. The major passion Roth's protagonist feels is anguish at the loss of his youthful vitality—the "tubular sprout" he was as a boy. For Didion it's the shattering of a routine that was central to her well-being. "You sit down to dinner and life as you know it ends," she writes. At times it's hard

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In Fact . . .

HAM-HANDED SMITHFIELD

■ Max Fraser writes: The United Food and Commercial Workers' "Justice at Smithfield" campaign, joined by labor, community and immigrant rights groups and religious leaders, staged a noontime demonstration at the corporate offices of Smithfield Foods in midtown Manhattan recently. The rally was an attempt to bring the meatpacking firm's abusive treatment of its nonunion workforce to the attention of New York consumers. Smithfield workers described dangerous and unhealthy conditions and illegal unionbusting at the company's Tar Heel, North Carolina, facility [see Eric Schlosser, "Hog Hell," Sept. 11]. New York labor leaders endorsed putting a resolution before the City Council to discourage city supermarkets from stocking products from the Tar Heel plant. Organizers entered the Smithfield building with a letter for chairman Joseph Luter III suggesting he "do the right thing" or face the possibility that New York consumers would find Smithfield products "distasteful"—only to discover company officials had decided, after the demonstration began, to take a long weekend. Smithfield's anti-unionism makes even more troubling a recent NLRB decision reversing a judge's order that Smithfield bargain with the UFCW at its Wilson, North Carolina, plant—and Smithfield's recent purchase of Premium Standard Farms, giving it control of more than 30 percent of the US pork industry and a North Carolina monopoly.

SLAVERY REPARATIONS UPDATE

■ John Friedman writes: At a recent hearing before the Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit, attorneys for slave descendants asked a three-judge panel to send their slavery reparations suit back for a further hearing to the US district court. A judge there had dismissed it last year, ruling that the statute of limitations had expired and that the plaintiffs had no legal standing. The twenty plaintiffs include Deadria Farmer-Paellmann, the attorney who first uncovered a corporate link to slavery, and Cain Wall, a 108-year-old man who was enslaved on plantations in Mississippi and Louisiana from birth until his escape in the 1960s. More than fifteen defendants are named in the class-action lawsuit, including JPMorgan Chase and Bank of America. Absent at the hearing in Chicago was Judge Ann Claire Williams, the only African-American on the court. She had recused herself, according to a court clerk. The plaintiffs' lawyers asked the all-white, all-male panel to disqualify itself and were told to file a formal motion. Williams refused to comment.

FAIR TURNS 20

■ John Nichols and Robert McChesney write: When Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting was founded twenty years ago, the conservative crusade to paint an increasingly consolidated and homogenized corporate media as somehow "left wing" had been advancing for the better part of a decade. Editors were pulling their punches in order to avoid the "liberal" label, and the pressure to dumb down the news in order to avoid controversy was already being felt. Worst of all, citizens were starting to accept the lie that journalism that failed to compliment right-wingers was "biased." FAIR fought back with the truth, exposing the conservative biases of most media, as well as the collapse of serious investigative journalism and the declining coverage of working families and communities of color. FAIR's critique helped millions of Americans recognize what would become the crisis of contemporary media, an awareness that laid the essential groundwork for the independent-media and media-reform movements that are now challenging the corporate stranglehold on our communications. As FAIR celebrates its anniversary, we salute a pioneering group that is even more necessary in this age of 24/7 news cycles, warped news judgment and Bush spin. (FAIR will hold a benefit October 12 at Cooper Union, 7 E. 7th Street, in New York City. Barbara Ehrenreich will speak. Tickets: $20 or $50. Info: www.fair.org or call 800-838-3006.)

POLL WATCH

■ David W. Moore writes: This summer the House broke ranks with the President by refusing to "stay the course" on at least one aspect of the Iraq War. When France refused to support US war efforts in March 2003, the House renamed french fries and french toast sold in its cafeterias "freedom fries" and "freedom toast." That action was ordered by GOP Representative Bob Ney, then chair of the Administration Committee, responsible for the House cafeterias. But this past July, those same cafeterias quietly reverted to the original names. The *Washington Times* suggested the change reflected shifts in public opinion, but in fact the public always disagreed with the renaming. A CNN/*USA Today*/Gallup poll at the time found two-thirds of Americans considered the new terminology "silly"; only 15 percent would actually say "freedom fries." A shift in leadership may better account for the word change: Representative Vernon Ehlers of Michigan replaced Ney as the committee chair, because of Ney's close ties to disgraced lobbyist Jack Abramoff. The *New York Times* opined that Ehlers may be "more sensible" about cafeteria policy. It said nothing about how sensible Ehlers might be about US policy in Iraq.

NATION NOTES

■ Awardees: Victor Navasky has won this year's Ann M. Sperber Biography Award for his memoir *A Matter of Opinion*. Administered by Fordham University, the prize is given annually to the best biography or autobiography of a journalist. Eyal Press's *Absolute Convictions* was honored with the Anne Fisher Champion of Choice Award by NARAL at its Fifteenth Annual National Power of Choice Luncheon. Mark Hertsgaard received an Open Society Institute Katrina Media Fellowship to examine the differing impact of global warming on whites and nonwhites in New Orleans, Miami and Calcutta. Two *Nation* columnists currently have books in the better stores. Katha Pollitt's *Virginity or Death!* contains eighty-four of her columns that appeared in these pages between 2001 and 2006, preserving her sharp take on issues that still engage us. Gary Younge, who appears monthly in *The Nation,* has a paperback edition of his *Stranger in a Strange Land: Encounters in the Disunited States* just out. Patricia J. Williams's "Diary of a Mad Law Professor" column will also be appearing monthly.

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COMMENT

to know whether she's grieving for her husband or the charmed life they led when he was alive. Roth, too, lets the affluence of his protagonist go unremarked, as if it were simply typical. But his Everyman really isn't that, and her insights into mourning aren't transferable to the vast majority of people. Death is when the forces that shape us show their hand.

The great literary realists regarded dying as a supremely social event. In Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, still the most powerful account we have of death amid prosperity, the spiritual and the social come together at the moment when a moribund civil servant, filled with bitterness at his fate and family, realizes that living well means living for others. Today that idea would be tagged politically correct or mystical at best. But Tolstoy understood that in embracing life around you there is solace. This concept no longer seems plausible, at least not to Didion and Roth.

The closest Didion comes to engagement is the brief moment when she considers those who died in the tsunami, but there's no revelation in that passing thought, and certainly no solace in the Tolstoyan sense. The closest Roth's protagonist comes to consolation is when he communes with his parents at their graveside. It's not exactly ancestor worship, but neither is it humanism.

During the 1980s, when AIDS exploded, it was impossible to write about the demise of a loved one without acknowledging that others were dying too. While AIDS literature generally ignored the toll on people of color, it couldn't avoid the fact that each casualty was situated in a suffering community. Such is the plague consciousness that Albert Camus famously described. But in these new books, there's no sense of the manifold ways death reveals the conditions of life.

I first noticed this new attitude in 1994, when medical historian Sherwin Nuland published *How We Die*. His purpose was to demystify death by giving his readers a detailed picture of what happens to the body. Then in 1999 came Jim Crace's stunning novel

Cultural Famine: A Cycle

Walter Mosley

...and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a day's wages, and three quarts of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!"

—Book of Revelation, Chapter 6, Verse 6

A while ago I was thinking about the phenomenon of famine; about how blight, disease, war, human nature and the earth itself sometimes conspire to deprive us of what we need to survive. At times starvation is used as a political tool by those in power to insure their control; other times it's just the season.

There are few afflictions worse than the slow death of entire families and villages, whole cultures that see death coming in each other's eyes. In its pure form famine is hunger carried out to its inescapable conclusion: pain and suffering wending unerringly to eternal emptiness.

It's not surprising that I was having these cheery thoughts while thinking about my country, my people, my race and how these intimate and integral parts of my life are juxtaposed with, and often aligned against, the rest of the world.

The deprivation of famine is certainly at its worst when people waste away and die. But there is also the possibility of another kind of famine: a dearth in the human soul. This barren emotional landscape, this spiritual famine is in full swing today among our people and in much of the rest of the world. Hopelessness, emptiness and senseless cynicism have taken up residence in so many of our hearts that we seem to be wasting away even while we are surrounded by riches and blessed with potential unequaled in human history.

We can see the deficiency in our nation through many sad manifestations: our willingness to go to war even though we are well aware that violence is the last resort of brutes; the poverty that grows daily like the vig on a loan shark's bottom line; the enormous expansion of our prison population; the stark, hungry and rampant adulation of wealth and fame.

I decided to come to *The Nation* to see if I could publish a cycle of brief reflections to create a dialogue about this psychic anorexia that has weakened our spirits to the point of collapse. In the pieces to follow I will try to address some of the many areas where we are undernourished and morally emaciated. I will bring up actions and systems we might employ to change the downward flow of things, addressing questions such as: How do we repair the damage of slavery and imperialism? How do we reclaim American democracy for working people? I also try to address some of the attitudes and systems that stand in our way. Here I talk about corporate persons (or legal fictions), prisoner voting rights and left-wing despair.

These reflections are the work of an ordinary thinker with an average mind who, despite his limitations, desires to have the whole world move forward, leaving no child, woman or man behind. This work is optimistic and inclusive, not elite, restricted or an example of brilliance. The questions here are all that matter. If my inquiries about our situation strike any chord, then the dialogues that follow will be worth the effort.

* * *

America stands on a fiscal precipice here at the start of the twenty-first century. China and India and South America present powerful challenges to our economic hegemony; Europe's united economy also imperils our dominance. Our money is worth less daily, our children's potential is dwindling; our medical insurance, Social Security and ability to make choices about when and if we retire are fast eroding.

We cannot, with our present economic system, compete with Asia's burgeoning workforce. We are no longer superior

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Being Dead, in which a thieving maniac murders a British couple on a beach. The book's main focus is on the transformation of their corpses as nature and its tiny fauna operate. This utterly materialistic account echoes Nuland's point about death, as he made it in a speech at Stanford: "The real determinant of how we die is our disease; it is not...who we are or who our doctor is." Try telling that to people with AIDS in Africa.

Social detachment breeds a rigid narrowness, as Tolstoy understood, and it shows in the foreshortened sensibility of these two books. Gone are the ambivalent parental portraits that Roth is justly famous for; now the mother and father (especially the father) are paragons of hard-working virtue. No doubt they were that, among other things, and no doubt the perfect marital partnership that Didion describes really existed. But in her remembrance there's not an inkling of resentment, not even the anger most people feel toward a loved one who has died. These complexities, which are central to the realist tradition, have yielded to a simplicity that feels more like a medieval morality play without the morality. What makes this hermetic approach to dying seem so credible? The answer lies in the aging of a generation and its retreat from the world. For many boomers, an I-Me-Mine attitude is preferable to the pain of struggling for social change in such a resistant time. Combine that with the heightened sense of vulnerability since 9/11 and you've got the sensibility of these two books.

Maybe their real subject isn't dying but the perception that even charmed America is subject to what Camus calls "death from a clear blue sky." You sit down to dinner (or breakfast) and life as you know it ends.

But where is the writer who will make us feel that way about other people? Where is our Dickens? RICHARD GOLDSTEIN

Richard Goldstein writes about the connections between pop culture, politics and sexuality.

in technology or the culling of natural resources. We can't even afford to pick our own vegetables or dig our own graves.

We've made enemies of the adherents of Islam, socialists, the French and much of the rest of the world. Most of our citizens are in debt over products that were made according to the lawful conspiracy of planned obsolescence, and we are mired in a war that we cannot win and yet cannot stop waging.

We say, and most of us believe, that our form of government is democratic at its root. But contradictorily, we suspect that it is the wealthiest among us who control Congress, the legal system and the presidency itself.

If we are lucky enough to achieve old age we know that all of our savings must be lost before we are interred in public nursing homes that have the smell and feel of detention camps—the last stop in the American Dream.

Our prisons are overflowing with undereducated and angry people of color, poor whites and the mentally ill.

Fast food clogs our arteries, and sugar is sprinkled over everything like fairy dust on ever-expectant Cinderellas. Television distracts us, and the Lotto is one of the minor faiths under the greater religion of Capitalism.

This is America. This is our home.

We worry that we might come in second or third when we are used to thinking about ourselves as Number One with a bullet. We are supposed to be the wealthiest, smartest, most powerful among nations. Our people are supposed to feel pride in our politics, our charity and our moral superiority.

But lately all of that seems to be slipping away.

What happened to us? How did we start to wind down? Why are we hated so? Why are we losing traction on the international playing field?

The answer, I believe, lies in a basic contradiction in our current national definitions of power and success. It was not the promise of wealth that made America strong; it was the hunger for freedom and the expressed belief that any woman, man or child has the potential to realize his or her abilities regardless of origin. It is not the questing after wealth and property that made us great but the belief in the rights of all human beings.

What would be wrong if our belief in our people made us less wealthy on an international level? What if we worked harder but ate better? What if we educated more of our children to become doctors but paid our doctors less? What if we built homes that anyone could afford to live in and limited the pain that profit often demands from our workers?

What if we demanded that we get value from our dollars and called out the credit card companies for what they are: loan sharks? What if we stopped policing the rest of the world and joined together with all nations as an equal looking for parity rather than professing our superiority because of our access to gold and the weapons we wield?

What if we recognized the crimes we've committed from Cambodia to Cuba, from Alcatraz to Africa? What if we recommitted ourselves to health, education and a minimum degree of wealth for all of our people? This would only serve to make us stronger (if not richer).

Because the truth is, we are starving on this fast-food, power-hungry diet of ours. Our children's minds are being strangled by our own corporations disseminating video games and advertising cross-trainers, selling SUVs and proudly manufacturing the tools of war.

Maybe if we had a little less and cared a lot more there would blossom the potential for happiness in our nation, more sweetness in our tone; we would certainly be stronger if our labor could support our lifestyles and our education opened our minds to the world. If we could realize that our culture creates criminality from the greed and poverty that abound within our borders, then we might have a chance to live in the world as equals, proud of our heritage and certain of our actions.

Walter Mosley is the author of the bestselling Easy Rawlins *mystery series, the novel* R.L.'s Dream, *the story collection* Always Outnumbered, Always Outgunned *and, most recently,* Life Out of Context *(Nation Books).*

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COMMENT

The 5 WORST 2006 CANDIDATES Seek REDEMPTION
GEORGE "MACACA" ALLEN... ...changes barbers.
KATHERINE (RECLAIMING AMERICA FOR CHRIST) HARRIS... ...joins a mosque.
CONRAD "LITTLE GUATEMALAN MAN" FIXES MY HOUSE BURNS... ...does some yardwork for local Latinos.
JOSEPH "STAY THE COURSE" LIEBERMAN... ...spends a weekend with Cindy Sheehan.
What I meant to say was...
ARNOLD "CUBAN... HOT... BLACK BLOOD" SCHWARZENEGGER ...trades his Hummer in for a '57 Bel-Aire.
STEVE BRODNER

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Orgasms and Wargasms

Sex scandals, at least in societies dominated by guilt-sodden Protestants, fulfill the therapeutic function usually attributed to pleasant or exciting sex: exploration of intimate areas of political life, surfacing "issues" normally repressed. America can't talk about Iraq, where American boys are raping 14-year-old girls and shooting families at close range, can't talk about torture, so instead we focus on what former Republican Representative Mark Foley wrote to a page about boxer shorts and their contents. What's the other option? Pack a tube of sex lubricant, holster up, grab a box of ammo and head for the Amish schoolhouse.

Here's Foley (code-named Maf54) in instant-message mode in April 2003:

Maf54: I miss you
Teen: ya me too
Maf54: we are still voting
Maf54: you miss me too

The two of them then—so say the transcribers at ABC News—"appear to describe having sexual orgasms."

Maf54: ok..i better go vote..did you know you would have this effect on me
Teen: lol I guessed
Teen: ya go vote...I don't want to keep you from doing your job
Maf54: can I have a good kiss goodnight
Teen: :-*
Teen: <kiss>

What was Foley off to vote for? That evening the House voted on HR 1559, Emergency War Time supplemental appropriations. Just another wargasm in the life of Empire.

Did Foley actually lay his filthy paws on gilded youth? There are gay guys who like to hang around teens, not necessarily with an overpowering urge for immediate sexual contact but more for the overall homoerotic buzz and the hope that one day one of the lads might say, You're the one. It's like the pilot in that great 1980 movie *Airplane*:

Captain Oveur: You ever been in a cockpit before?
Joey: No sir, I've never been up in a plane before.
Captain Oveur: You ever seen a grown man naked?
Captain Oveur: Joey, do you like movies about gladiators?
Captain Oveur: Joey, have you ever been in a—a Turkish prison?

This sounds like Foley to me. When in doubt, head for the Betty Ford Center. Although no one seems to be buying it, Foley is trying to bring booze into disrepute, saying that he was drunk all those times he whacked out the instant messages on his laptop. He also says he was abused by a priest as a lad and now suffers from mental illness. A trifecta! Foley probably spent a lot of time studying the human pyramid and dog photos from Abu Ghraib before rushing off to draft the strong language he inserted into the Child Protection and Safety Act earlier this year. People cry angrily that this is hypocrisy. I'm not sure why. If you know what you are capable of, surely it's sound moral conduct for a legislator to try to guard society from the beast within.

What gives a scandal legs is always the cover-up, or the appearance of a cover-up. Republicans in tight races are panicking because Dennis Hastert and other senior Republicans sat on the scandal. "I don't think it would pass the sniff test," says West Virginia Representative Shelley Moore Capito, referring to claims that the first set of e-mails between Foley and the pages on the topic of boxer shorts did not seem to be conclusive evidence of anything really bad. Sniff test? What can Shelley have been thinking of?

Beyond their inherently uplifting aspect—bringing powerful people into ridicule and disrepute—political sex scandals can be very educational about sex and political economy. Who does not recall that tryst in the White House—unearthed by special prosecutor Ken Starr—between Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky in 1996, when Bill, receiving satisfaction from Monica in his nether regions, gave satisfaction over the phone to Alfonso Fanjul, the Florida sugar baron who was complaining that Al Gore had just proposed a sugar tax and had vowed to clean up the Everglades?

The bluenoses try to ban sex ed and then provoke scandal, which duly engenders sex ed in glorious Technicolor. Bill Clinton fired his first Surgeon General, Joycelyn Elders, asked at a 1994 conference at the United Nations whether adults should promote masturbation among youth as a way to discourage dangerous sexual behavior. "I think that is part of human sexuality," she answered, "and perhaps it should be taught." Maybe Foley should volunteer to be a teacher, as part of a plea bargain.

I often tell people they shouldn't worry too much about the evangelical Christians. People who spend so much time lecturing others about sin are likely to go sinning themselves, and in the end, like Jimmy Swaggart, they get caught heading into the whorehouse. Republicans are a repressed lot, unless they become libertarians like Justin Raimondo. He can flaunt his own trifecta: gay, antiwar and pro-capitalism. Back in Reagan time, when I was on the campaign trail, the motels were always filled with Republicans stitched into their squeaky-clean suits who were obvious closet cases.

Most certainly the country has been ripe for a political sex scandal. Given the paralysis at the straightforward political level, it's pretty much the only safety valve we've got. Let's hope the Foley scandal will give us at least a hundredth as much educational uplift and fun as did the great Lewinsky scandal of immortal memory. This doesn't mean Bush won't bomb Iran. He might do it to change the subject, and all those Republicans will interrupt their instant messaging to the page boys to go vote the President all appropriate powers. ■

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KATHA POLLITT

Foley's IMbroglio

I know the election is just a month away and the Democrats need every vote, but... Did Mark Foley really deserve to be drawn and quartered for engaging in lubricious instant messaging with male former Congressional pages? Foley's advances were creepy and disturbing and bordered on sexual harassment, to say nothing of bad taste—I'd definitely put "I always use lotion and the hand" in the Too Much Information category. But given that by law Senate pages must be 16 years old or more, and that 16 is the legal age of consent in Washington (and most states), to call him a "child molester" (Tucker Carlson on MSNBC) and "child predator" (various pundits) seems rather severe. Almost as severe as, um, calling Bill Clinton's affair with the 22-year-old Monica Lewinsky "vile" and voting to impeach him. Which, as it happens, Representative Foley did. "It's more sad than anything else," Foley went on, prophetically, "to see someone with such potential throw it all down the drain."

Foley has resigned and entered rehab: According to him, it was the drink typing, or maybe the results of having been molested by a clergyman in his youth. His fellow Republicans prefer their usual suspect: liberals. Denny Hastert claims the revelations are a Democratic dirty trick. Rush Limbaugh says liberals are the real hypocrites ("In their hearts and minds and their crotches, they don't have any problem with what Foley did, they've defended it over the years"). Which seems ungrateful, given how many liberals wrote compassionately about Rush's addiction to illegally obtained Oxycontin, despite Rush himself having urged draconian punishments for drug addicts. Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council blames "pro-homosexual political correctness." Matt Drudge indicts the teenage "beasts" themselves: "The kids are egging the Congressman on!" They're probably liberals, too.

Unlike White House press secretary Tony Snow ("naughty e-mails"), I don't minimize Foley's behavior. It's wrong for middle-aged men to come on to teenagers, even if they're of legal age and even if, as some of the IM exchanges suggest, the young person seems willing to play ("with a towel you can just wipe off and go"). Let the kids fool around with each other. But there's something unseemly about the festival of ritual humiliation: You'd think he was raping 5-year-olds, not exchanging dirty IMs with high school seniors who could, after all, just log off or not reply. The blasts of indignation sweeping the blogosphere seem awfully opportunistic: "deranged pedophile," "sicko," "children at risk." As the Republicans are eager to remind us, Dems are no angels: Gerry Studds slept with a page in 1973, ignored the censure of his colleagues and kept his seat until he retired in 1997; Mel Reynolds had sex with an underage female campaign worker, went to prison and was pardoned by President Clinton; Barney Frank—and we love Barney Frank—unknowingly housed his boyfriend's prostitution service in his apartment and was re-elected all the same. And don't forget former New Jersey Governor Jim McGreevy, the proud gay American, now promoting his tell-all as part of his healing process. Men with power: It's not a pretty sight.

Unfortunately for the Republicans, they are ill positioned to make the everybody-does-it defense. Their whole shtick is that they're the community pillars, and the Dems are tramps and perverts. Now the image is blowing up in their faces, and too bad for them. Nobody forced them to get in bed with the Christian fundamentalists, who think homosexuality is evil and disgusting and sex outside marriage God's biggest preoccupation. If the family-values right wants Hastert's head on a platter, it serves him right. Live by Jesus, die by Jesus.

The Washington Monthly's Kevin Drum thinks Foley will sweep the Dems back into power: Financial corruption like the Abramoff affair is complicated and boring, but everyone understands sexual shenanigans. Perhaps, but are the voters really so brain-dead? Is there no point trying to whip them up into a frenzy about some outrage that actually matters? Like, oh, Bush's refusal to declassify the full National Intelligence Estimate documenting how the Iraq War has created more terrorists. Or Afghanistan, where the Taliban is resurgent—so much so that Senator Frist said he wants to put them in the government. Have we given up on habeas corpus, just voted away with the help of twelve Democratic Senators and twelve House Dems, including Sherrod Brown, often praised in this magazine? It would be interesting if someone mentioned the record Foley compiled on the rare occasions when he zipped up his pants and went to work—like his support for that stupid 700-mile fence along the Mexican border, and for denying public education to illegal immigrant children. Now *that's* what I call child molestation.

It shows you how hapless and shallow the Democrats are that they find so little electoral joy in a principled coherent challenge to Republican rule. Instead, we get tactical theatrics over whatever comes down the pike: last month gas prices, this week Foley. I see why the Democrats feel they have to do it: They're too compromised, the contests are too close and the discourse has been dumbed down for so long, it takes something simple and splashy to get people's attention. But it doesn't say much for the party—or for the rest of us, either.

* * *

Last chance to help make history in South Dakota. Progressive prochoice Native American women candidates for the state legislature—Theresa Spry, Diane Kastner, Paula Long Fox and Faith Spotted Eagle—urgently need donations to campaign effectively and get out the vote. So far, these grassroots community activists have gotten next to no help from Planned Parenthood, NARAL or the state and national party. Small sums go a long way out there, so don't be shy if your purse is light—just donate what you can online at womenrun.org or send a check to WomenRun! SD, PO Box 2983, Minneapolis, MN 55402. ■

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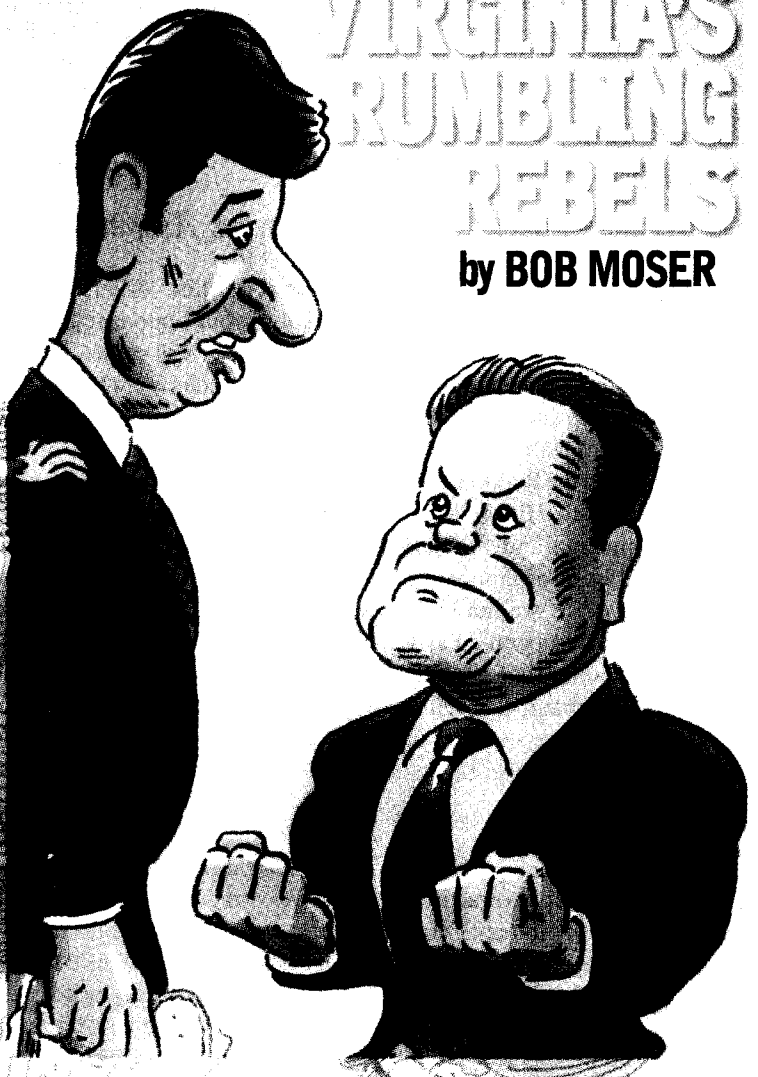
ARTICLES

VIRGINIA'S RUMBLING REBELS

by BOB MOSER



A bit past 5 o'clock on a mid-September Wednesday, one month after the miraculous resurrection of his moribund Senate campaign, Jim Webb comes busting out of Call Room One, where Democratic candidates are held captive for hours at a time and forced to plead for cash. Catching the eye of his "body guy," former *Marine Corps Times* editor Phillip Thompson, Webb barks, "We've got to be in Alexandria, don't we?" The former Navy Secretary's feet, shod in combat boots belonging to his son, Jimmy, who's just gone on active duty in Iraq, never stop churning as he pushes through the heavy front door of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee's Washington headquarters and pounds down the narrow walk-up toward his ride—a small SUV, painted in camouflage, with a JIM WEBB—BORN FIGHTING sign fixed to the side. Behind the wheel, as always, is "Mac" McGarvey, who lost an arm in Vietnam under Webb's command. When his "best friend" decided last February to challenge Virginia's wildly popular Republican Senator, George Allen, Mac up and left his job running a bar in Nashville, volunteering to spend the next nine months being directed—and misdirected—all over the interstates and backroads of Virginia.

"I have no idea where we're going," Mac says as Webb bounds into the front seat, quipping, "That could be taken as a symbolic statement about this campaign." After haggling with the body guy over the best route to his after-work campaign rally, Webb props a boot up on the dashboard and calls over his shoulder, "We have a live at 5:25?"

"There's a live at 5:40."

"All right. Oh, man. Do you have the binder with the speech in it?" The body guy hands it up to Webb. "I'm sorry," the candidate calls back to me. "You can ask me questions in a minute. I don't have a speechwriter, and I just wrote this this morning, and I need to go over it." It's impossible to tell whether Webb, who's congenitally deadpan, is kidding about the speechwriter. He speed-scans the copy, scribbling a few lines in the margins and handing back a page at a time to the body guy, who's quietly pointing Mac toward Alexandria. When they get there—if they get there—Senator Barack Obama will be there, too, making his first pitch for a former member of Ronald Reagan's Cabinet. It will also, no doubt, be Obama's first endorsement of a formerly bitter critic of Vietnam War protesters, civil rights activists, 1960s liberals, affirmative action policies and women in combat—just a few of Webb's targets through the years.

From a cranky Republican traditionalist, Webb has transformed into one of the unlikeliest protest candidates ever. And now, thanks to the spiral of controversy set off by Allen's now-legendary "macaca moment" in mid-August, Webb has also become the unlikeliest of this year's Democratic challengers to have a genuine shot at toppling a Republican incumbent and giving his new party a majority in the next Senate.

Webb's gonzo campaign—chaotic, underfunded and featuring a candidate who refuses to pander or even, at many campaign appearances, to so much as crack a smile—grew out of his exasperation with Allen's unwavering support for George W. Bush's Iraq adventure. Webb had been warning against military intervention in Iraq, insisting that it would destabilize the Middle East and spawn dangerous anti-Americanism, since the late 1980s. After he wrote an op-ed in September 2002 predicting US invasion forces would "quickly become 50,000 terrorist targets," Webb met with the senator—whom he had endorsed over Democrat Charles Robb in 2000—to discuss his concerns. Webb came away with his dander up, disgusted by Allen's reportedly insisting, "You're asking me to be disloyal to my President."

Webb might have been a hellacious soldier—one of the most highly decorated to return from Vietnam, in fact—but he has never been a go-along guy, to say the least. His stint as Navy Secretary, for instance, ended with Webb abruptly resigning after just ten months, protesting the Reagan Administration's refusal to fully fund the 600-ship fleet he insisted was necessary. But as mad as he was about Iraq, and about Allen's automatic approval of Bush's disastrous policies, Webb took his sweet time deciding whether to challenge Allen's re-election bid. It would mean abandoning his lucrative writing career, which has included six critically acclaimed war novels, a successful Hollywood screenplay (*Rules of Engagement*) and a bestselling cultural history of the

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Scots-Irish in America (*Born Fighting*). It would also mean having to do things the proud and contrary Webb despises—like begging for money. When he finally took the plunge, it was with high hopes the candidacy might "inspire some intelligent debate" on the war. Webb had also decided he could help "reshape American politics" by showing how a Democrat can combine foreign policy "realism" with an old-fashioned dose of economic populism to win in the South again.

"I think both parties have been taken over by elites," Webb says over his shoulder after he's done perusing his speech. "The natural base of the Democratic Party, working-class folks, looked at both parties and saw they weren't going to get any more help on economic issues. The one place they thought they could make a difference was on these divisive social issues, so that's how they've been voting. But I think that has run its course now." So, he says, has the "cultural Marxism" of the 1960s that's dominated the Democrats. "We're in a sea change with political terminology and identities," he says. "What is right and what is left anymore? What is conservative and what is liberal?"

'We've always thought George Allen was racially insensitive.' —John Boyd Jr. National Black Farmers Association

With his mix of "foreign policy realism, economic populism and social moderation"—Webb is prochoice and staunchly opposed to the anti–gay marriage amendment on the Virginia ballot this November—he aims to put a crack in the Republicans' recent dominance of federal elections in the South. His challenge is not only to the GOP but to national Democrats and "Yankee liberals" who have increasingly abandoned hope of competing in the South. "This race is a test," Webb says. "If we can get a number of these people to come back to the Democratic Party based on economic populism and fairness, rather than the way they've been maneuvered on issues like flag-burning, God, guts, guns, gays—if they can be reached out to with respect, and in terms of fundamental fairness, I think a lot of them will come back to the Democratic Party."

It seems fitting that if he's going to win on November 7, Virginia's newest fightin' Democrat will have to beat a champion practitioner of the Republicans' faux-populist Southern Strategy. Often viewed as the second coming of Ronald Reagan, George Allen has mastered the art of convincing working-class voters he's a regular guy while carrying water for big money. The Southern California native's blend of Disneyesque optimism, easy-going geniality and tough-guy talk have made him—as a state legislator, congressman, governor and US senator—one of the most popular figures in Virginia history. "He's always been a very smooth, on-message politician," says longtime observer Mark Rozell, professor at George Mason University and co-editor of *The New Politics of the Old South*. "Allen had a natural touch for the political that could disarm some of his worst enemies, with that nice smile and charm. And he seemed incapable of making a mistake on the campaign trail. It was no surprise that conservatives were seeing him as their best presidential option for 2008."

Bob Moser, a Nation *contributing writer, is editorial director of The Nation Institute's Investigative Fund.*

But in just fifty-nine seconds on the second Friday in August, Allen's veneer cracked. It happened, not coincidentally, in the "Reagan Democrat" stronghold of southwest Virginia, where Allen had deployed "moral" wedge issues to rack up nearly a 2-to-1 margin over Senator Robb in 2000, more than enough to cement his victory statewide. At a small rally in Breaks Interstate Park, Allen was amiably plying his stock of platitudes, promising to "run this campaign on positive, constructive ideas." Then Allen spotted the lone audience member of color, Webb campaign volunteer S.R. Sidarth, a 20-year-old Fairfax native of Indian-Asian descent who'd been following Allen on his summer "listening tour," videotaping his remarks. Jabbing an index finger in Sidarth's direction, Allen said, "This fellow over here in the yellow shirt, Macaca or whatever his name is, he's with my opponent—he's following us around everywhere." Allen flashed his fans a broad, mischievous grin. "And it's just great. We're going to places all over Virginia, and he's having it on film." Allen swiveled back toward Sidarth. "You show it to your opponent [*sic*], because he's never been here and probably never will come."

In his suddenly awkward way, Allen was sticking to the tried-and-true Southern Strategy script, attempting to paint his Democratic foe as an out-of-touch elitist. Rather than communing with the everyday people of southwest Virginia, he said, Webb "actually right now is with a bunch of Hollywood movie moguls." (Webb was in Los Angeles for a fundraiser.) In contrast to his highfalutin literary opponent, Allen said, "We care about facts, not fiction. So, welcome—let's give a welcome to Macaca here. Welcome to America, and the real world of Virginia."

By nightfall, Allen's remarks were burning their way across the World Wide Web and reviving long-held suspicions about the Senator's racial views. As a state legislator, Allen had voted against Virginia's Martin Luther King Day. As governor, he issued a proclamation honoring Confederate History Month, asserting that the Civil War, far from a slavery dispute, was "a four-year tragic, heroic, and determined struggle for independence, sovereign rights and local government control." In the 1993 gubernatorial campaign, Allen's lifelong passion for the Confederacy—symbolized by the rebel flag displayed in his living room and the noose he'd hung up in his law office—raised eyebrows but did not prevent him from using religious wedge issues to win a surprisingly high slice (as much as 17 percent, according to one poll) of the African-American vote. Once in the Senate, he relied on symbolic gestures—a well-publicized "civil rights pilgrimage" to Alabama, a formal apology for slavery that he cosponsored—to foster the illusion of racial moderation.

So much for that illusion. "We've always thought George Allen was racially insensitive," says John Boyd Jr., president of the Virginia-based National Black Farmers Association. Allen didn't help matters, especially among working-class voters who like a "stand-up guy," when he subsequently claimed he'd invented the word "macaca" on the spot. He stumbled over questions about his mother's roots in French Tunisia, where "macaca" is a common racial slur.

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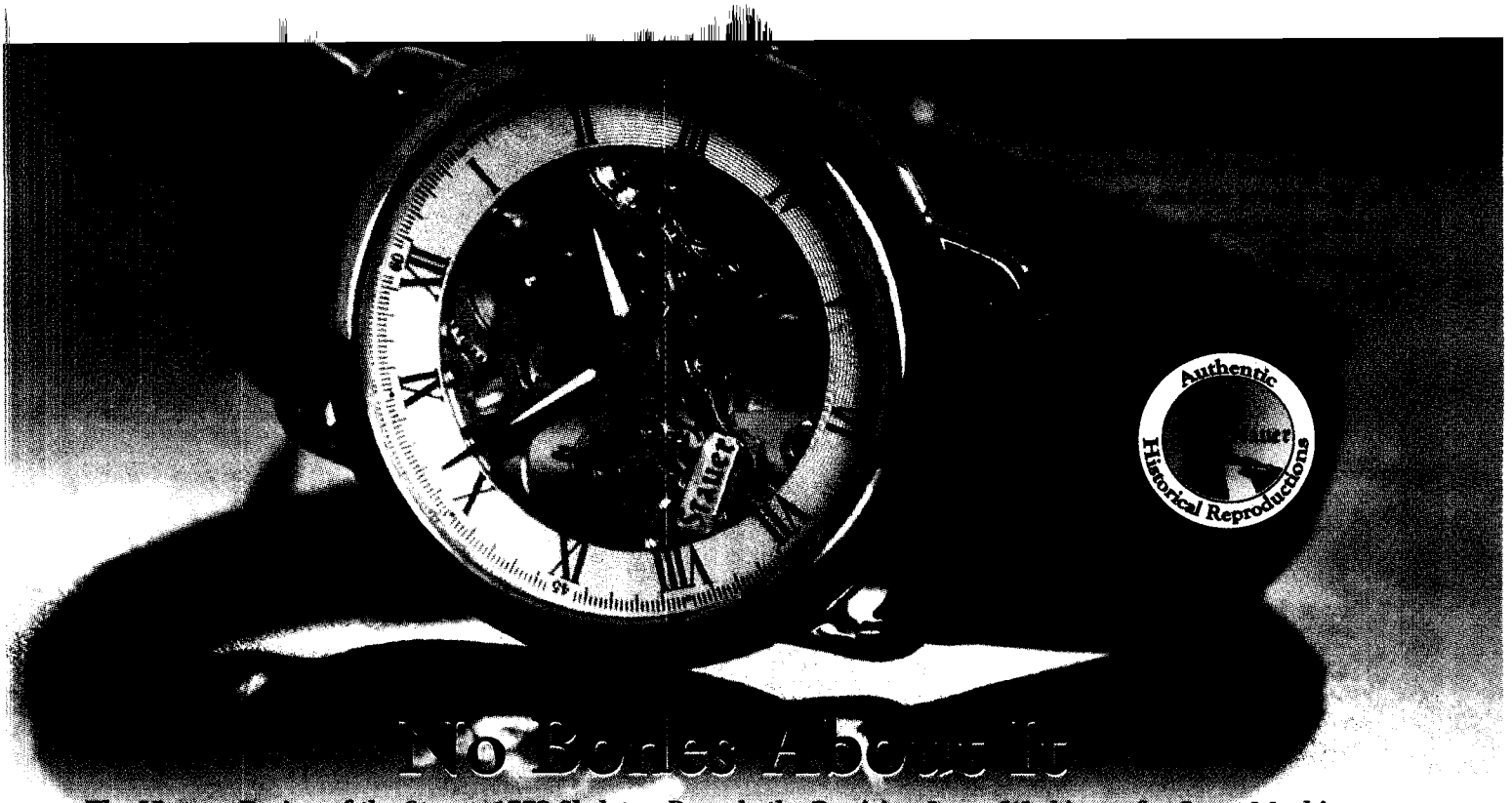

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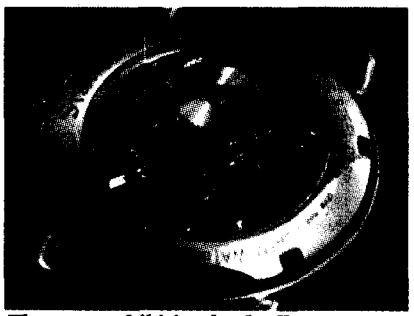

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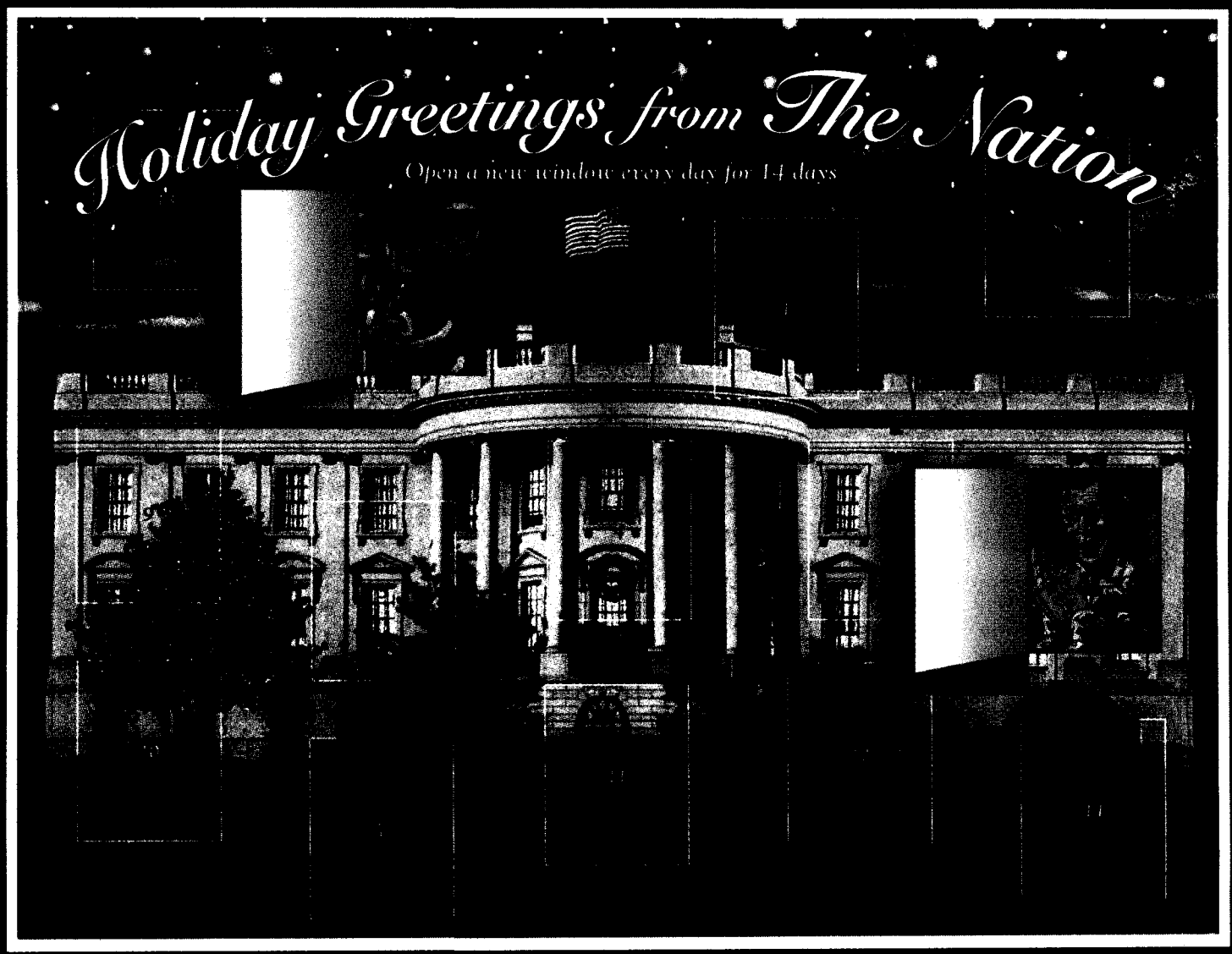

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In a September address to a national conference of black educators, Allen—a professional politician for nearly thirty years—said he'd learned a "valuable lesson about the power of words." Reverting to a familiar campaign theme—in which he scores cultural points by reminding folks that his dad, George Allen Sr., was the longtime Los Angeles Rams and Washington Redskins football coach—the beleaguered Senator cooked up a bizarre explanation for why he never learned to respect racial sensitivities. "On football teams and every team sport, you don't care about someone's religion, race or their ethnicity," he said. "All you care about is if that person can help your team." The color-blind racial utopia of football, Allen went on to say, is precisely what "we should aspire for in our society here in America."

A few weeks later on *Salon*, three of Allen's former football teammates at the University of Virginia accused him of having used the word "nigger" with some regularity during his college days—claims echoed by well-known Virginia political pundit Larry Sabato, another classmate of Allen's at UVA. Allen flatly denied the accusations, saying, "It is not who I was and is not who I am." But even the old teammates who remembered him fondly also remembered that his affection for country music and the Confederacy had led them to call him "Neck," short for redneck.

'I look at the race and I see two Republicans running for the same job.'
—State Senator Benjamin Lambert

Now, it seemed, everybody in Virginia—everybody in America—was buzzing about George Allen's racism. Everybody except his opponent.

On the third Sunday in September, Jim Webb got what looked like the second big break of his campaign. In a *Meet the Press* face-off, host Tim Russert joined Webb in dogging Allen about his unflagging support for the Iraq War. Webb's incisive critique of the war and his call for an ambitious "diplomatic process" that would include Syria and Iran sounded mighty appealing next to Allen's grinning recitations of White House talking points. When he squared off with Allen the next afternoon at a Chamber of Commerce debate in Fairfax, Webb intended to build on his *Meet the Press* momentum and make the campaign—finally—a referendum on the war, and on GOP mistreatment of the middle and working classes.

Instead, the debate was only just warming up when Allen suffered yet another "macaca moment." When local TV reporter Peggy Fox asked where the Senator had learned his now-infamous racial slur, Allen launched into a defense of himself and his family, noting among other things that his mother's father, Felix, had been incarcerated by the Nazis during World War II. He should have left that last part out. Fox had read a recent article in *The Forward* alleging that Allen was trying to hide his family's Jewish heritage, and she asked him if the allegation was true. The question jolted the normally unflappable Allen, who visibly recoiled while his half of the audience jeered and hooted the reporter. "Why is that relevant—my religion, Jim's religion, or the religious beliefs of anyone out there?" he demanded. When Fox stoutly replied that she was seeking "honesty, that's all," Allen angrily defended his honor, insisting, "I was raised as she was, as far as I know, raised as a Christian."

Throughout it all, Webb stood stock still, gazing straight ahead, expressionless as a grunt at roll call. When his time came to comment, Webb managed only to mumble a few words about how he didn't see why Allen's religion mattered. And the next day, when Allen admitted in a written statement that his mother had indeed revealed to him, a month earlier, that her family was Jewish, Webb remained as lock-lipped as he had through the whole "macaca" controversy.

Campaign-watchers viewed Webb's strange silence as another sign of his stubborn resistance to behaving like a proper politician. "The 'macaca' fallout softened up George Allen for the kill," says Mark Rozell. "Webb doesn't seem to know how to plunge the knife in."

But Webb's reticence is not simply the product of poor politicking—or a noble refusal to sling mud. Webb has troubles of his own with the same issues that have caused Allen's stumbles. During his Democratic primary campaign last spring, Webb was accused of anti-Semitism after his campaign put out a cartoonish flier depicting his opponent, Harris Miller—a longtime corporate lobbyist—as "Miller the Job Killer," a big-nosed, cigar-puffing "anti-Christ of outsourcing." (Miller now says he's convinced that his former opponent is "not an anti-Semite.")

Far more problematic for Webb's campaign—especially in a state where nearly a fifth of the voting-age population is African-American—is his history of bashing affirmative action. The most notable example is a *Wall Street Journal* book review in 2000, where Webb wrote: "Affirmative action, which originally sought to repair the state-induced damage to blacks from slavery and its aftermath, has within one generation brought about a permeating state-sponsored racism that is as odious as the Jim Crow laws it sought to countermand." When questions came up during the primary campaign about Webb's startling assertion that racial "preferences" were as damaging to society as segregation itself, Webb tried unsuccessfully to argue—as he does at length in *Born Fighting*—that affirmative action should be based on a history of economic deprivation, not simply on race. But he also said, somewhat confusingly, that he believes African-Americans should be the sole beneficiaries of affirmative action programs, not members of other ethnic groups.

As a result, says civil rights activist and Virginia Commonwealth University professor W. Avon Drake, potential black voters don't know what to make of Webb. "He went a little too far in changing his position," Drake says. "Blacks can sense when someone is genuine." When word got around that Webb had addressed Confederate descendants at the National Confederate Memorial in 1990, asserting that Southern soldiers believed they were fighting for "sovereignty rather than slavery," some black Virginians could only conclude that there was scant difference between the two white candidates for Senate. "I look at the race and I see two Republicans running for the same job," says longtime State Senator Benjamin Lambert of Richmond, who stunned his colleagues with a late-August endorsement of Allen, who had promised to help Lambert

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win more funding for traditionally black colleges.

Lambert's endorsement will carry little weight statewide, especially given the avalanche of racial embarrassments for Allen's campaign. In a Mason-Dixon poll taken in early September, just 5 percent of black Virginians said they would support Allen this time. But only 73 percent said they'd vote for Webb—well below the usual mark for Democrats running statewide. Webb's campaign has yet to be endorsed by the state's most powerful black Democrat, former governor and current Richmond Mayor Doug Wilder, and it's faced criticism all along for failing to reach out aggressively to black leaders and voters. But in late September Webb met with the black legislative caucus and made the rounds with respected black leaders like Ray Boone, editor of the state's largest black newspaper, the *Richmond Free Press*. Boone has his doubts about Webb, but his paper has taken Senator Lambert to the woodshed for equating Webb's shortcomings with Allen's. "The bottom line is that we need to send a strong message that the George Allen type of politics is intolerable and unacceptable," Boone says. "He has built a career on racist campaigns." When November rolls around, says Drake, "Webb will get 90 percent of the black vote. The question is how many votes there will be."

If gay marriage is supposed to be Allen's ace, Webb might yet trump him with his unblemished record of opposing the Iraq War.

"I am fired up!" Barack Obama shouts from the stage in Alexandria. "I need some help in the Senate." And Jim Webb's help, Obama says, is just the kind he wants. "I've had enough of politicians who act tough on TV," he declares. "I want somebody who really *is* tough." Together, Obama promises, he and Webb will work toward the kind of "practical, nonideological, honest and trustworthy government the American people deserve."

Under the pure blue sky of this late-summer afternoon, with a big, diverse crowd wearing Webb stickers and cheering lustily, the messy crosscurrents of the year's strangest Senate race seem far away. Even Webb, who breaks into more than one smile during the proceedings and hugs Obama happily when it's over, seems momentarily carried away by the giddiness of a campaign that is, out of the blue, looking like a winner. A little more than a month before, Webb had been a forgotten candidate, trailing by double digits in the polls and facing an ominous 15-to-1 fundraising deficit. The prominent national Democrats whose endorsements had put him over the top in the primary were nowhere in sight. Democratic campaign committees, busy pouring millions into "key" non-Southern states, had coughed up a grand total of less than $40,000 for Virginia as of July—not only shutting out a compelling antiwar candidate but ignoring the fact that the Old Dominion has become so competitive in recent elections that pollster John Zogby has dubbed it "the new Ohio."

Now that Webb is neck-and-neck with Allen in the polls, the money's coming in—however belatedly. So are the rock star Democrats: John Edwards and Hillary Clinton, among others, would soon follow Obama's lead. The Illinois Senator's appearance was calculated, of course, to ratchet up enthusiasm for Webb among black voters. But his unqualified embrace of Webb will also help here in northern Virginia. With its booming population of left-leaning nonnatives, northern Virginia is the main reason Virginia has become, in pundit Sabato's terms, a "purple state." To beat Allen, Webb will need an overwhelming margin of victory here to offset the votes of "moral conservatives" elsewhere—especially since the Republican still has at least one ace in the hole.

Named for its Christian-right co-sponsors, the Marshall-Newman amendment is expected to draw droves of evangelical Virginians to the polls. Allen, meanwhile, is expected to spend a sizable portion of his campaign war chest on ads portraying Webb's opposition to the measure as proof that he's just another amoral, elitist liberal. But it might not be the silver-bullet wedge issue Allen is looking for. That's partly because Virginians don't like to mess with their Constitution, whose declaration of rights is the world's oldest such document. It's mostly because the amendment—vaguely worded and sure to prompt a spate of lawsuits if it passes—has the broadest reach of any yet proposed.

"What's really amazing, as compared to your garden variety gay-bashing, is the breadth of its application to opposite-sex couples," says Michael Schewel, former Virginia secretary of commerce, who's been speaking against the amendment to business groups. "The only thing it doesn't affect is gay couples," because state law already prohibits them from marrying or enjoying spousal benefits. After an initial paragraph defining marriage, the rest of the amendment prohibits all "unmarried individuals" from exercising any "rights, benefits, obligations, qualities or effects of marriage."

"This is nothing but a divisive wedge issue to get their people to the polls," says Charley Conrad, president of Virginia Partisans Gay and Lesbian Democratic Club. But where other states' amendments have merely been summarized on their ballots, the full text of Marshall-Newman will be there for Virginia voters to read—thanks to the efforts of amendment opponents like Governor Tim Kaine, who pressed for a state law requiring the full amendment to appear. "Our slogan ought to be, Read the whole thing," Schewel jokes. Polls show that most Virginians who do read the amendment are confused—and opposed.

If gay marriage is supposed to be Allen's ace—along with the millions his campaign has to spend on attack ads—Webb might yet trump him with his unblemished record of opposing the Iraq War. In Virginia, like everywhere else, disgust with the war cuts across partisan, racial and cultural divides. "Black people know the war is not making life better," says Ray Boone. "It's diverting resources abroad. It's killing our people."

Bush's war is no more popular in predominantly white southwest Virginia—at least not on a recent Saturday in Castlewood, where hundreds gathered for the annual fish fry and political rally of the United Mine Workers' local. "We think it's useless," says Jimmy Taylor, a young truck driver. "Why send more people in to get killed?" Taylor's girlfriend, Brittany Brading, agrees. "Bush is sending all this money to Iraq when people are homeless and hungry here. It's disgusting."

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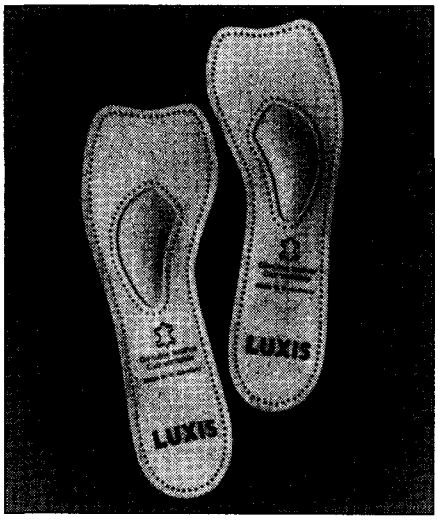

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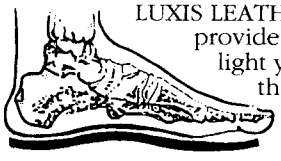

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In the heart of George Allen's "real world of Virginia," this year's fish fry mostly turned into a rally for Jim Webb. Southwest Virginia generates about one-third of the state's votes, and cutting into the Republicans' normally large margins of victory here was key to this decade's elections of successive Democratic governors, Mark Warner and Kaine. Webb just might do the same. While Allen has his wedge issues, he can't match the depth of Webb's connection to these folks—or his understanding of the reasons that many of them have strayed from the Democratic fold.

Like practically every 60-year-old white person with roots in southwest Virginia, Webb was born into a blue-collar clan of ardent Democrats. As he came to political consciousness in the 1960s, Webb grew offended by the attitude civil rights activists—"liberal Yankees," in particular—took toward working-class whites in the South. "The fight over ending legal racial segregation," he writes in *Born Fighting*, "ended up demonizing people who had shared the same social and economic dilemma as the blacks themselves." The venom should have been directed, Webb believes, at the small class of wealthy Southern (and Northern) whites who had always controlled Dixie's economy and insured the continuation of Jim Crow. When he came back from Vietnam, Webb was equally dismayed by the cold shoulder returning soldiers received from those who opposed the war. It was enough to send him scurrying, along with a growing number of white Southern Democrats, into the waiting arms of the GOP.

"I was generally comfortable with the Republicans, until the neoconservatives took over," Webb says. "But the one issue that always bothered me was economic fairness."

In Castlewood Webb heeds his own advice to Democrats: Respect the voters you're addressing. His speech is virtually identical to the one he gave in "liberal" northern Virginia—right down to the Marx and Engels references—and carries precisely the same message: Bush and Allen's war is a disaster, and working Americans are getting shafted while corporations and CEOs rake in record profits. One thing's different here, though: Webb's laconic delivery, far from a liability, testifies in shorthand that he's no slick politician. Which makes him a far cry from his opponent, says Sam Church, UMW local's political coordinator. "Allen doesn't relate to working people—has he ever had a job?"

Perched in a lawn chair nearby and clutching his cane, Robert Ervin—who left the mines in 1979 after thirty-eight years—doesn't mince words. "George Allen? He's the nearest nothing ever been in this country. He's a big old fake, that's all." If enough Virginians end up agreeing with that assessment, Allen will be in a heap of trouble on November 7. And for all his lack of political panache—in fact, partly because of it—Webb will have pulled off something few thought possible: making the Republican in a Southern race look like the one who's unreal, elitist and out of touch with regular folks.

For a lot of Virginians, it's been looking like that ever since Labor Day. The holiday doubles as the state's annual kickoff for election seasons, and it's long been obligatory for politicians running statewide to appear in the big Laborfest Parade in Buena Vista, not far from the Blue Ridge Parkway. This year was a little different. Jimmy Webb was about to ship out to Iraq and his dad, the antiwar candidate, decided to skip the biggest political day of the year to say goodbye.

"Everybody had heard where Webb was that day, and why," recalls Charley Conrad. "So people are standing there watching the parade, and what do they see coming down the street but George Felix Allen, in a big white ten-gallon hat and those fancy boots he always wears, grinning and waving from atop a brown-and-white horse called—I'm not kidding—Bubba. And all I could think was, I sure hope people are paying attention." ■

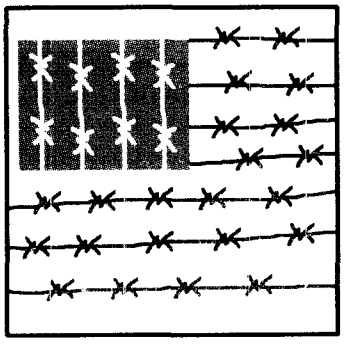
A DEMOCRAT LEADS IN ARIZONA'S 8TH DISTRICT, A NATIONAL BELLWETHER ON IMMIGRATION.

The Minutemen Hit the Wall

MARC COOPER

Tucson

As about sixty supporters of Democratic Congressional candidate and businesswoman Gabrielle Giffords gathered in late September for a wine and guacamole fundraiser at a local hillside home, their mood was nothing short of electric. Earlier in the day a news report had swept through this desert district with all the drama and punch of a late summer monsoon: The National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) had just canceled about $1 million in planned TV ads for Giffords's GOP rival, Randy Graf. "The Republicans have firmly planted the white flag in this district," said a jubilant Giffords campaign official. "This is nothing short of surrender."



IGOR KOPELNITSKY

Indeed, the *Washington Post*'s political blog has identified Arizona's 8th Congressional District seat, held for eleven terms by retiring moderate Republican Jim Kolbe, as one of those most likely to switch parties in next month's mid-term elections. Even more important, in a race seen as a national bellwether on the immigration debate, Republican candidate Graf, supported with $40,000 in contributions from a Minuteman PAC, banked his entire campaign on a virulent seal-and-militarize-the-border message. If the anti-immigrant pitch was going to work anywhere in America, this would be the place. The contested district sweeps downward from Tucson, runs along an eighty-

Nation *contributing editor Marc Cooper is a visiting professor and associate director at USC Annenberg's Institute for Justice and Journalism.*

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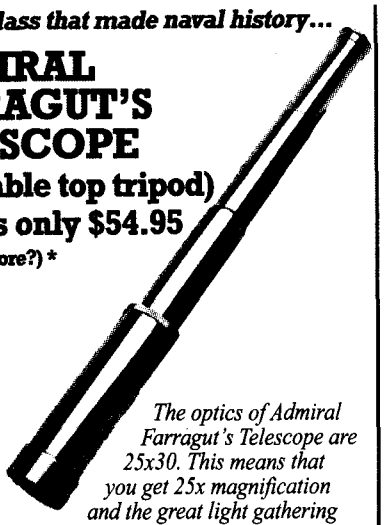

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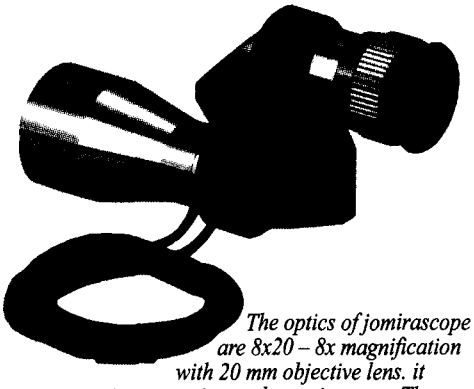

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mile portion of the Mexican border that is the most trafficked of illegal crossings, and includes such Minuteman hot spots as the towns of Sierra Vista and Tombstone. About half of the illegal aliens apprehended on the US-Mexico border attempt to cross into Arizona, and anti-immigrant sentiment can turn red-hot.

But here in the veritable staging ground of the Minuteman movement, Graf's campaign has hit the wall. "Randy's going to get his ass handed to him," says a veteran Arizona Republican consultant. "And in this national atmosphere, the NRCC isn't about to piss away a million bucks on him." The refusal by the national Republican Party to invest in Graf was fueled by some pretty stark numbers, and to a great degree reflects the deep division that runs through the GOP on the issue of immigration.

A late September poll conducted by the *Arizona Daily Star* showed Giffords out in front of Graf by a whopping 48–35 margin. And while immigration even outranked the war in Iraq by 4 to 1 as the most important issue on local voters' minds, those who put it first also gave a majority to Giffords, who has endorsed the sort of comprehensive border reform proposed by Senators Ted Kennedy and John McCain.

'Right-wing tirades in a border area like this make Republicans look like crackers.'
—GOP consultant

"Graf speaks directly to his base, but only to his base," says the GOP consultant. "If something freakish were to happen in the next few weeks and this guy were actually to get elected, it would be a disaster for us. Right-wing tirades in a border area like this make Republicans look like crackers. With more and more people coming to live in Arizona and many of them at least slightly liberal, Republicans can't afford to sound like racists."

Fear among the Republican establishment that Graf was too extreme to win in a moderate district was heightened in this crucial year, when the loss of any seat could tip the balance of the House majority. This is a socially temperate district that sometimes gave the openly gay Republican Kolbe more than 60 percent of the vote. In 2004 Graf—a former pro golfer and state legislator—challenged Kolbe in the primary and won a surprising 42 percent of the vote. The day after the vote, Graf started gearing up for his next shot, the 2006 primary. He campaigned relentlessly and single-mindedly on the border issue, praising the Minutemen and tightly aligning himself with the policies of Colorado Representative Tom Tancredo, the leader of House resistance to liberalized immigration reform.

"Randy Graf was in the right place at the right time to capitalize on the immigration issue," says Margaret Kenski, pollster for Republican Arizona Senator Jon Kyl. Graf, whose campaign wouldn't schedule an interview with *The Nation*, cashed in on the national immigration debate that roared through much of this year. And in a five-way primary September 12, Graf came out on top, with a 42 percent plurality. In an unusual move, the NRCC had intervened directly in the primary and poured more than $120,000 into the campaign of his more moderate opponent Steve Huffman—the only race in the country in which the NRCC took sides in a primary. Other top local Republicans lined up with local GOP stalwart Mike Hellon in a move to stop Graf.

But the organizational power of anti-immigration, anti-choice and conservative mega-churches propelled Graf's victory and also helped defeat a number of other moderate and prochoice Arizona Republican candidates. It also laid bare the GOP's deep factional fissures. "We're really in a state of internal warfare," says a former Republican National Committee member still active in local politics. "It's really the most extreme Republicans who are winning the primaries, and they're making it harder and harder for us to win statewide offices. We've been through this two or three times already, but after each round it is getting harder to put the party back together again."

Scrapping Reagan's so-called Eleventh Commandment enforcing GOP unity, outgoing Representative Kolbe, a firm supporter of comprehensive immigration reform, pointedly un-endorsed Graf on the morrow of his victory, saying that because of "profound and fundamental [differences] I would not be true to my own principles were I to endorse [Graf] now for the general election." Neither will any endorsement be forthcoming from the state's most popular Republican, John McCain. Nor from a host of other elected Arizona Republican officials who openly shun Graf.

Apart from Graf's in-the-tank numbers, he still draws loud jeers from his 2004 appearance on *The Daily Show*, where he argued to overturn an Arizona law that bans handguns in bars. On the same show he blithely compared the Constitution to a rule book for golf. An unsolicited link to his campaign website from the site of former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke hasn't helped matters.

Arizona Republicans find themselves endangered in other races beyond the 8th district match-up between Graf and Giffords. Conservative six-term Representative J.D. Hayworth, who represents the Phoenix suburbs and whose book *Whatever It Takes* calls for a ban on legal immigration from Mexico, is facing a serious challenge from Democrat Harry Mitchell. Former Republican Attorney General Grant Woods has endorsed Democrat Mitchell, calling Hayworth "ridiculous." Even more disturbing to Arizona Republicans is the predicament of Kyl, a recent target of Latinos protesting his immigration policies. Kyl faces a stiff challenge from wealthy Democratic developer Jim Pederson. "Frankly, I'm amazed how competitive Kyl's race has suddenly become," says the veteran GOP consultant. And Republican social conservative Len Munsil will need divine intervention to defeat incumbent Democratic Governor Janet Napolitano, last seen outpolling him 56 to 40.

Back in the 8th district, meanwhile, Democrat Gabi Giffords won a contested primary by firmly seizing the political center vacated by Graf's campaign. A former state legislator (and a former Republican), Giffords has garnered the unified support of the local Democratic and labor machinery but has striven to run what she calls a bipartisan campaign. The national Democratic Party has become so confident of her victory that one day after the NRCC canceled its ad campaign for Graf, the DCCC followed suit on behalf of Giffords.

Already well funded and likely to be buoyed by outside "independent expenditure" campaigns, Giffords has de-emphasized

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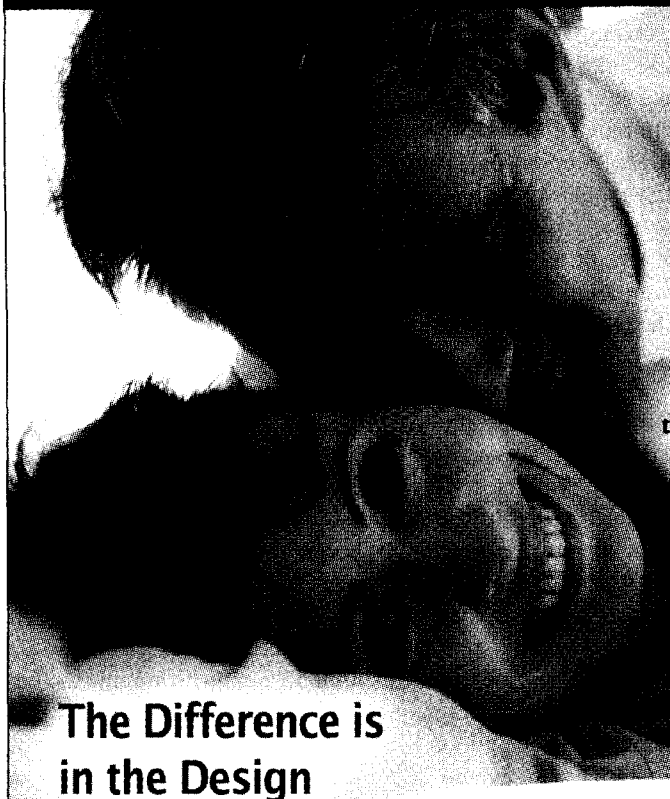

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the debate over the war in Iraq and has rather deftly co-opted Graf on the immigration issue. "Starting back in May of last year, the Democrats began pounding away on the border issue as if they were Republicans," says pollster Kenski. "And Gabi does it as well as any."

"Enforcement-plus" is the way Giffords describes her immigration position: tighter enforcement, plus an expanded visa and guest-worker program. But listening to Giffords address her campaign supporters at that hillside fundraiser, it sounded like "enforcement" was 90 percent of the equation and that the "plus" was maybe 10 percent. After denouncing a "strategic systematic decision" by the federal government to funnel immigrants through the Arizona desert, she went on to say it's "just not acceptable to have so many people that we don't know who they are, we don't know where they are going and we don't know what they want." To stem the tide, she called for more "radar, aerial drones, electronic surveillance, tough employer sanctions"—and, yes, "a guest-worker program."

During the question-and-answer session, some of the gathered supporters were disgruntled with Giffords's emphasis on enforcement hardware but nevertheless seemed reassured by her clarifications that immigration reform also had to include expanded legal pathways. "I'd rather she put the emphasis on the second part," said one of her toughest questioners. "But you have to suppose she's saying what's she's saying because she wants to get elected. I also support that."

The Giffords campaign coincides with a Latino voter mobilization already under way as a result of this past spring's upsurge in pro-immigrant demonstrations. As many as 15,000 came out to Tucson street rallies in April to support liberalized border reform. "It's a hot enough issue that people want to go out and take action. Being part of this campaign is one of those actions," says Daniel Garcia, a volunteer with the Giffords campaign and with a local affiliate of the grassroots Industrial Areas Foundation. "With Graf and the Minutemen blaming just about everything including global warming on immigrants," he says, "this race has absolutely become a place where a lot of emotion has surfaced, and we are channeling that into the campaign." Giffords also has the solid support of the local Democratic political network headed by Representative Raúl Grijalva, one of the strongest voices for immigration reform.

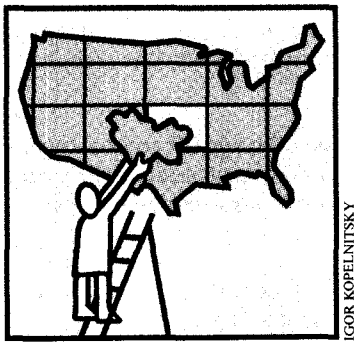
Democrat Tom Volgy, former Tucson mayor and now a university professor, argues that Giffords's ascension in this southern Arizona district should be unequivocally cheered as a national example. While close-the-border intransigence by the Republican right succeeded in torpedoing comprehensive immigration reform, it has now seemingly boomeranged to the GOP's disadvantage as an electoral strategy. "Arizona is the most hard hit by immigration," Volgy says. "But what you see here highlights something really good about the American people. You take a very difficult issue that lends itself to simplistic arguments, but the more you subject it to debate, the more sophisticated and nuanced public opinion becomes. This is the really great part of what's happening here." ■

AS PROGRESSIVES GRAB FOR GOVERNORSHIPS, DEMOCRATS COULD ENJOY A BANNER YEAR.

Repainting Statehouses Blue

JOHN NICHOLS

Not too long ago, the image of a Democratic governor was that of California's Gray Davis, the listless, ideologically compromised bureaucrat who was so uninspiring that he couldn't even maintain his grip on a very blue state. Then, two years ago, rabble-rousing rancher Brian Schweitzer snatched the top job in the formerly red state of Montana from the Republicans and quickly elbowed his way onto the national stage with so many ideas and so much energy that he was profiled on CBS's *60 Minutes* and then promoted for the presidency by a grassroots Internet campaign. This year Schweitzer will get company, perhaps a lot of it, as a team of smart, energetic progressives grab for governorships in what may well be the best year for Democrats in the states since 1990. The most prominent of their number, New York's Eliot Spitzer, is already better known than several 2008 presidential contenders, thanks to his aggressive policing of Wall Street and his defense of the environment and consumers as the state's crusading attorney general.



IGOR KOPELNITSKY

Running on the Democratic and Working Families Party ballot lines, Spitzer is so far ahead in the polls (72 to 21 in one recent survey) that there's talk he could finish with a higher percentage of the vote than his ticket-mate, Senator Hillary Clinton, who is counting on a landslide to carry her into the presidential sweepstakes. Spitzer's not going to try to take the 2008 nod from Clinton, but he's got plans to hit the ground running so fast that the governorship of New York could by 2012 or 2016 again be what it was throughout much of the last century: the launching pad for national candidacies by the likes of Franklin Roosevelt, Tom Dewey and Nelson Rockefeller. With his "Day One: Everything Changes" campaign slogan, Spitzer says he's out to prove that government can still work. "Day one is when we set out to make healthcare more affordable and cover every single child in the state of New York," he pledged the night he won the Democratic nomination, "and it's when we begin to fully fund education to insure that for every New Yorker, the path to opportunity and prosperity begins in our schools."

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One of the most exciting aspects of Spitzer's campaign is that he has grounded his big ideas in a populist appeal that builds on the giant-killer reputation he achieved as an attorney general who attracted national attention when he took on the securities industry, but whose biggest accomplishments came in lower-profile but no less significant fights with polluters, insurance companies and corporations that sought to raid the pension funds of retired workers. "If one man can stand up to the powerful, so can you," Spitzer's television ads declare.

What's even more exciting is that Spitzer is not the only Democratic gubernatorial candidate whose energy and style could shift both state policies and national debates. States remain, as Louis Brandeis said more than seventy years ago, "laboratories of democracy"—the places where new ideas are turned into smart policies and implemented. California's Arnold Schwarzenegger, like many Republican governors this year, sees that the best way to run for re-election is to run from President Bush. Schwarzenegger earned national headlines over the summer by signing legislation that aims to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions to fight the climate changes the White House has yet to acknowledge. And he's not the only state official who is pushing the policy envelope. Maine Governor John Baldacci, a Democrat, has been at the forefront of the fight to extend access to quality healthcare, implementing the innovative Dirigo Health Initiative.

Baldacci and several other governors have begun to wade into debates on trade policy, telling Congress that the Administration's free-trade agenda isn't working. And, as more and more responsibilities devolve to the states, there's a growing sense that governors and legislators can and must begin to establish economic, healthcare and education policies that are dramatically distinct from—and dramatically more progressive than—those coming out of Washington. This model of "progressive federalism" is perhaps best illustrated by the decisions of twenty-three states to establish minimum-wage rates that are higher than the federal rate.

To be sure, not every laboratory of democracy produces positive results; earlier this year South Dakota's legislature passed and Republican Governor Mike Rounds signed a measure that effectively banned access to abortion in that state. Rounds is being challenged this fall by physician Jack Billion, a former state legislator who says he wants to seize the state that gave America George McGovern and Tom Daschle back from "the radical extremists" who showed their hand with the abortion ban.

The fight for control of statehouses is not merely about particular policies, however. With the federal government dominated by the forces of reaction, state government is far more likely than Washington to point the way out of the morass of the moment—and to produce the next generation of progressive leaders. This is nothing new. The modern Democratic coalition was forged by Roosevelt, a governor who beat a Republican President in the depths of the Depression.

But whatever their politics, governors have proven to be good bets when voters are perceived to be looking for change. Since FDR, former governors Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton have been the only Democrats who have defeated Republican Presidents.

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ers, however. They also have a hand in determining how federal electoral contests turn out. Control of statehouses gives a party organizational and structural advantages in everything from the drawing of district lines for Congressional seats to presidential politics, as was illustrated to the dismay of Democrats by Florida Governor Jeb Bush in 2000 and Ohio Governor Bob Taft in 2004. That's one of the reasons Democrats have been frustrated by their relatively weak position in the states in recent years.

In the early 1990s the Democrats controlled thirty governorships, but after the Republican landslide of 1994, they were down to just nineteen. The comeback has been slow, hindered in particular by the party's weakening position in the formerly "solid" South. Today, Democrats control only twenty-two governorships. But most of this fall's thirty-six gubernatorial elections appear to be trending Democratic. Polls suggest that disenchantment with Bush in particular and Republican rule in general, along with ethics scandals in Ohio and several other states, has soured voters on Republican incumbents and candidates in open seats outside the South. In addition to Spitzer's expected win in New York, a state that fell to the Republicans in 1994, Democratic prospects appear to be good in the currently Republican-led states of Arkansas, Colorado, Massachusetts, Maryland, Minnesota, Nevada and Ohio. Even with Democratic incumbents looking vulnerable in a couple of Midwestern states that have been rocked by the auto industry's decline—Michigan and Wisconsin—the

State Cops

If you are seeking election as a state attorney general these days, it helps to have a résumé like that of Gary King, the Democrat who is running for the job in New Mexico. King has a doctorate in organic chemistry and a record of service as a policy adviser to federal agencies on energy, land use and nuclear waste disposal issues long enough to earn him praise from the Sierra Club for his "real world understanding" of environmental essentials. He's also a lawyer, a former City Attorney and a former legislator who spent twelve years crafting New Mexico's statutes. King's combination of scientific and legal skills may be rare in politics, but it should prove extremely useful if, as expected, he's elected in November.

The days when state attorneys general were merely cops-and-robbers prosecutors are long gone. In states across the country, and increasingly at the national level, attorneys general are in the forefront of fights on everything from access to birth control to price-gouging by oil companies to preserving pensions to preventing state laws from being pre-empted by free-trade agreements. Of particular note has been their aggressive and often effective advocacy on behalf of environmental protection initiatives that have had few friends at the federal level since President Bush took over. Attorneys general haven't just been going after companies that fail to obey the law, they've been going after the Bush Administration for failing to enforce the laws.

New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, the nation's most prominent prosecutor, made his name going after targets usually regulated by the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Food and Drug Administration. But Spitzer was also in the thick of state-generated challenges to the Environmental Protection Agency's neglect of its responsibilities. In 2004 he led a coalition of attorneys general who got a judge to block implementation of federal rule changes that would have allowed major utilities to expand their plants without upgrading environmental protections. Earlier this year Spitzer was one of ten attorneys general who sued the EPA for "failing to adopt strong emission standards to reduce air pollution from new power plants."

Spitzer is one of several attorneys general seeking higher office this fall. But his exit won't end the new pattern of activism: Incumbents such as Connecticut's Richard Blumenthal and Rhode Island's Patrick Lynch, who have worked with Spitzer to protect the environment in particular, and more generally to hold corporations and federal regulators to account, are leading races for re-election in a year that will see twenty-nine states choose their chief law enforcement officers. And their ranks are likely to be joined by a new crew of change agents. Californian Jerry Brown's long, strange political trip has him on track to secure the attorney general job in the nation's largest state, while New Yorker Andrew Cuomo, a former Clinton Administration Cabinet secretary and the son of former governor Mario Cuomo, is ahead in the race to replace Spitzer. Both promise to pick up where Spitzer left off, as do a number of impressive Democratic candidates for open posts, such as Minnesota's Lori Swanson, who currently serves as that state's solicitor general.

Swanson may well be the most ambitious of the newcomers. She promises that if elected, she will use her authority not just to take action against HMOs and insurers that deny Minnesotans benefits to which they are entitled and to crack down on predatory lenders—as many attorneys general now do—but also to combat discrimination against women and minorities, to demand accountability from corporations and to lead the fight to prevent Congress from pre-empting consumer protection laws as part of moves to deregulate the healthcare, pharmaceutical, mortgage lending and banking industries.

Predictably, such pledges have not endeared Swanson to corporate interests in Minnesota or at the national level, and she's facing attacks from business and conservative groups. That's to be expected. The ranks of activist attorneys general won't increase without a fight in states where corporate interests are waking up to the reality that some of the most serious threats to the Bush Administration's Wall Street–friendly policies are coming from the states. After Kathleen Falk, a veteran Wisconsin environmental lawyer who served for many years as an assistant attorney general responsible for intervening to protect air and water quality and wetlands, won the Democratic nomination in September, the state's big-business lobby immediately bought $300,000 in television attack ads. Falk's campaign shot back by charging that her GOP opponent and his backers were "trying to bring the failed environmental policies of the Bush/Cheney Administration to Wisconsin." Actually, what the business lobbies are trying to do in Wisconsin and elsewhere is to prevent more state attorneys general from using their legal skills and their positions to assure that the Administration's polluter-friendly environmental policies—as well as its corporate-friendly approaches to a host of other issues—do indeed fail. —J.N.

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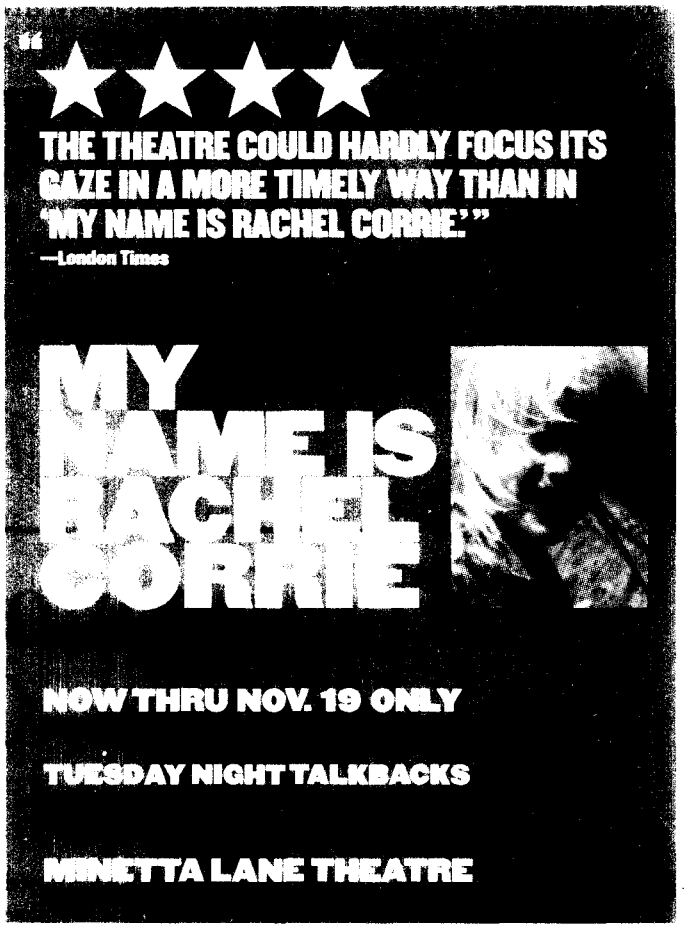
November 7 elections could well give the Democrats the upper hand in the states for the first time in a dozen years.

If that happens, the party will not merely have a better balance sheet; it will have a list of fresh new leaders. While Spitzer, as Governor of New York, will get more attention than most, he may have to share it with the likes of Massachusetts's Deval Patrick, the former NAACP attorney who ran the Justice Department's civil rights division under President Clinton, and Nevada's Dina Titus, a college professor and author turned legislator, both of whom are serious contenders for the top jobs in their states. Patrick, who entered the Democratic primary contest as a virtual unknown, secured the backing of progressives with his strong support for the marriage rights of lesbians and gays, his ardent opposition to the death penalty, his sympathy for immigrants and his backing of a minimum-wage hike and healthcare for all. He then built a highly effective field operation, run by veteran civil rights and social justice activists, that easily beat the campaigns of the state attorney general and a free-spending millionaire in the September 19 primary. Titus, who appears on her campaign website holding a SAVE RED ROCK CANYON picket sign, is an environmentalist who has led fights for smart-growth solutions in the booming Las Vegas area. She highlights her pro-choice position. And she welcomes support from the increasingly powerful labor unions in one of several Western states where changing demographics and shifting moods are creating openings for Democrats.

Titus is in a nasty contest with Republican Congressman Jim Gibbons, who decries her liberal legislative record and dismisses her as "Dina Taxes." But Gibbons, like other GOP House members seeking governorships this year, has been hampered by his ties to Bush. And the Nevada Republican has had a tough time uniting his own partisans: So far, outgoing Republican Governor Kenny Guinn has refused to endorse Gibbons over Titus, while Guinn's son, a prominent businessman, is backing the Democrat.

Republican divisions are also on display in the President's home state of Texas, where Bush's successor as governor, Rick Perry, finds himself challenged not just by Democrat Chris Bell but by a prominent Republican. State Comptroller Carole Keeton Strayhorn, the mother of former White House spokesman Scott McClellan, recently jumped party lines to run as an independent. The most colorful candidate in the Texas contest is another independent, country singer and author Kinky Friedman, who is radical enough to propose committing the oil state to a renewable-energy future. Friedman's "clean energy and clean government" campaign has caught fire; he's at 23 percent in the polls to Perry's 35 percent, and a televised debate in which the wisecracking Friedman is likely to shine is yet to come. Friedman's a long way from the statehouse, but he's running better in the polls than wrestler turned Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura was at the same point in 1998. In the still unlikely event that Friedman wins, the spotlight will be his. But the better bet is that, come November, attention will turn to the headline-friendly Spitzer—and, if the voting favors them, Patrick and Titus—along with the prospect that Democratic governors will again have both the authority and the star power to play a critical role in defining the policies and the politics of their party and the nation. ■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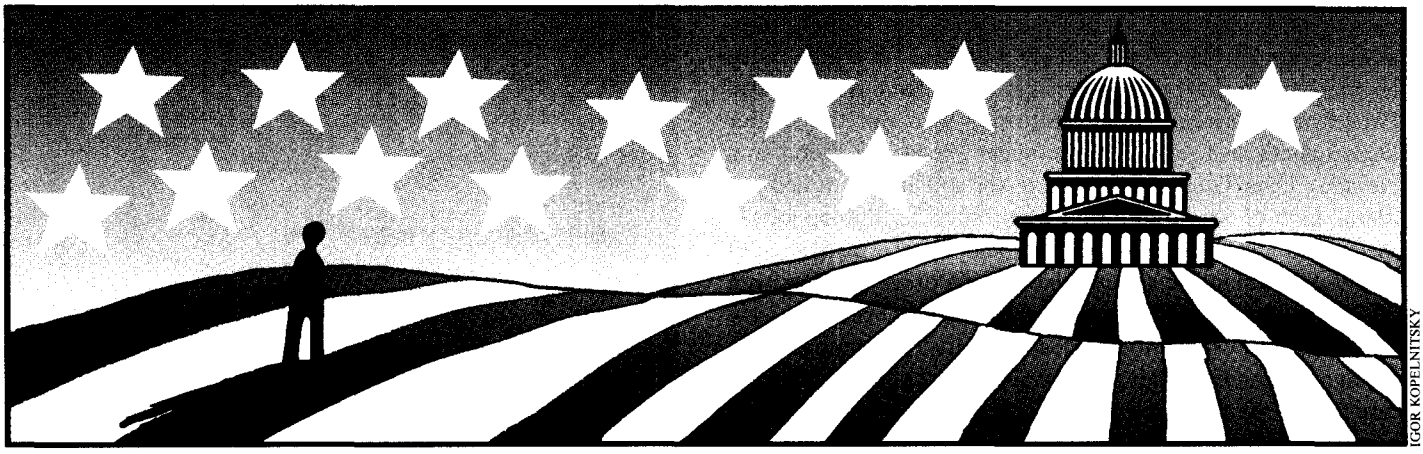
BUSH AND THE GOP CONGRESS ARE FANNING FEAR OF A TAX INCREASE BY DEMOCRATS TO DISTRACT ATTENTION FROM A MISMANAGED ECONOMY AND PAY-TO-PLAY POLITICS.



IGOR KOPELNITSKY

The Economic Debate: Fear vs. Corruption

ROBERT L. BOROSAGE

"This economy of ours is strong," George W. Bush informed voters in Ohio. But if Democrats win control of the House of Representatives, he warned in Florida, "they'll raise your taxes. It will hurt our economy, and that's why we're not going to let them get control."

In late September the President momentarily interrupted his drumbeat on the threat Democrats pose to the failing "war on terror" to trumpet the threat they pose to the flailing economy. With Americans squeezed between sluggish wages and rising costs, the slogan "they'll raise your taxes" rouses fears, just as "cut and run" does on Iraq. As in the Iraq debate, the President doesn't tell us what he'll do to get us out of the mess he's made; he simply charges that Democrats will make it worse.

Just as in the Iraq debate, Bush's claim regarding the economy is a true lie: Most Democrats *have* pledged to roll back the President's tax cuts for the wealthy—but they've also championed tax breaks on college tuition and childcare that would benefit the vast majority of Americans. Just as in the Iraq debate, most Republicans will echo Bush's charge, giving the GOP a clear message on the economy in the final month of the campaign.

Bush can't govern worth spit, but he does know how to run campaigns. Polls suggest that his late-summer fear offensive helped rally disgruntled Republicans. His tax offensive is designed for broader appeal to families already struggling to make ends meet.

The challenge for Republican incumbents, just as in the debate on the war, is that they must distract the electorate from the failure of Bush's policies. The economy is growing, CEO salaries are soaring and profits are up—but most Americans aren't seeing the benefits. Their jobs and incomes are less secure. Companies are bailing out on healthcare benefits and pension obligations. Costs for everything from healthcare to college tuition are up. Personal debt and personal bankruptcies are at record levels. Americans are working harder and longer just to keep up.

So when Bush talks about how strong the economy is, most Americans think he's out to lunch. He traveled to Cincinnati to hail a family-owned manufacturer that had added 125 jobs, touting this as a product of his tax cuts. AFL-CIO leader John Sweeney stepped on the story, calling Bush "unbelievably out of touch" to think he can fool the 195,000 workers who have lost good manufacturing jobs in Ohio over the past five years.

The economy ranks just after Iraq and terrorism as a central concern of voters. The issue is teed up for Democrats, since the President and the Republican Congress, catering to corporate lobbies, have acted consistently to make things worse. Their trade and tax policies have accelerated the flight of jobs abroad, the "outsourcing" that Administration economists claim is a benefit to the economy. The GOP has blocked any increase in the minimum wage for nine years and coddled employers who trample on labor laws and exploit undocumented workers, adding to the downward pressure on wages. They turned the prescription drug benefit into a drug company subsidy by prohibiting Medicare from negotiating lower prices with the pharmaceutical industry. They blocked efforts to hold Big Oil accountable for price gouging and fraudulent underpayment of royalties for oil leases, while lavishing billions in subsidies on oil

Robert L. Borosage, a Nation *contributing editor, is co-director of the Campaign for America's Future.*

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companies and starving progress on alternative energy. They provided companies with incentives to abandon pensions and replace them with individual retirement accounts. They cut billions from the student loan program, even as interest rates were soaring on student and parent loans.

Despite its timidity, the little-noticed Democratic "New Directions" program offers a clear contrast to these follies. With new-found unity—a testament to the leadership—Democrats pledge to require Medicare to lower drug prices, to raise the minimum wage, to repeal tax incentives for moving jobs abroad, to cut college loan rates in half, to launch a drive for energy independence. By exposing the incumbents' pay-to-play politics, Democratic challengers can show voters they are paying the cost of conservative corruption and that it's time to clean out the stables.

Not surprisingly, polls show Democrats with double-digit leads on most economic issues, from healthcare to energy to education. Voters think corporations have too much power in Washington. Large majorities favor more regulation and accountability. Large majorities think the current Congress is out of touch with people like themselves. CEOs are about as popular as Mafia dons. Even on taxes, polls show Democrats well ahead of Republicans.

Fanning fear of taxes is the strongest card conservative incumbents have in a weak hand. Republican strategists hope the recent decline in gas prices, after a large and painful increase, will take the edge off what they call the "cost-of-living issue," and that fear of taxes can distract from their mismanagement of the economy, just as fear of terrorism will distract from the failure in Iraq. A *New York Times* analysis of ad purchases in eleven competitive Senate races shows that taxes are featured in the highest percentage of Republican ads, far more than security. Healthcare, energy, the economy and jobs lead Iraq in Democratic ad buys.

For Republicans, "they'll raise your taxes" is an attempt to connect your pocketbook with their growth strategy—lower taxes, smaller government, deregulation, etc. Generally absent on the Democratic side is any deeper grappling with the failure of these policies over the past quarter-century—or clarity in proposing a bold alternative. During the Bush years, conservatives have mortgaged the store. They've racked up record foreign debt and record budget deficits. We have the lowest interest rates in memory, but we're still hemorrhaging private-sector jobs. Emerging threats like catastrophic climate change have been scorned. The growing deficits in public investment—from schools to alternative energy to competitive broadband—have been ignored. The corporate unraveling of the employee safety net—healthcare benefits, stable jobs, pensions—has been callously celebrated as the dawn of an "ownership society," as in, "I've got mine, you're on your own."

Democrats are tongue-tied on these larger issues. The Wall Street/New Democrat wing of the party is still wedded to the conservative budget, trade and deregulation policies of the past. Bold new initiatives are strangled by the timidity, ingrained during the Clinton years, of tactical retreat. The New Directions

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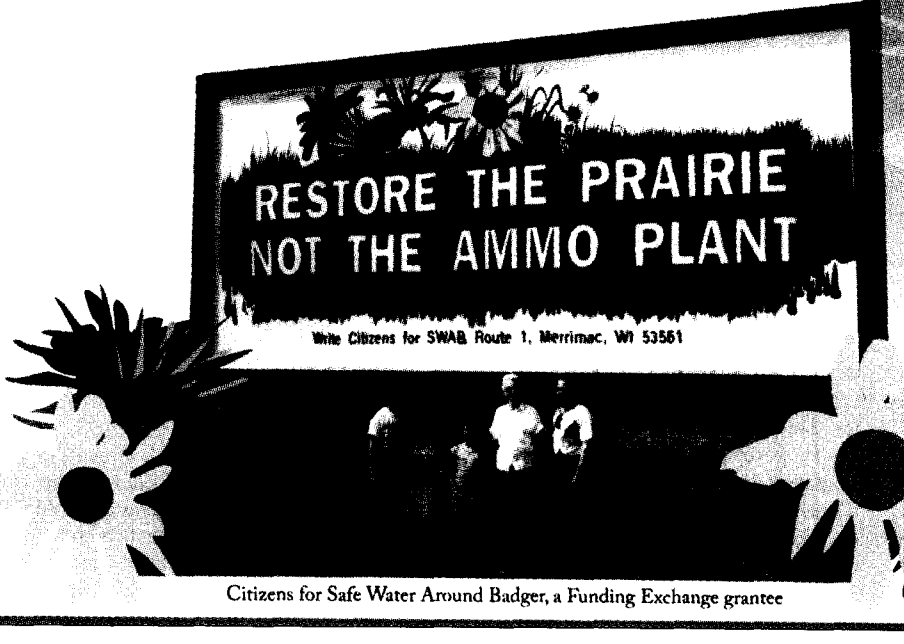

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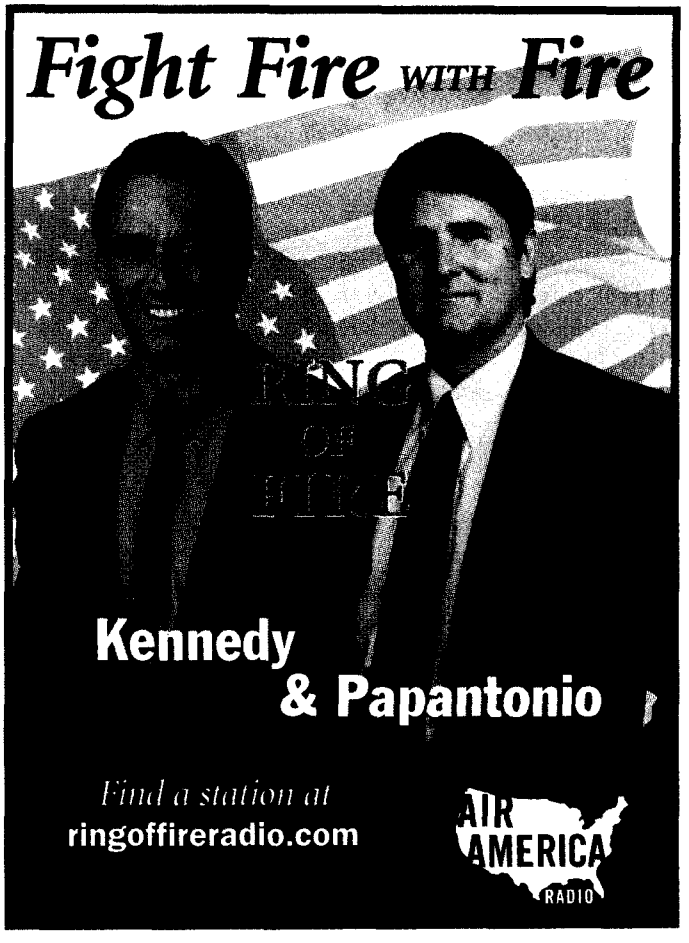

platform promises to rectify the excesses of the right, but it doesn't connect this pledge to a new growth strategy for the economy.

If populists like Sherrod Brown in Ohio, Bernie Sanders in Vermont and Jon Tester in Montana are elected, they could help crystallize this debate before 2008. And if Democrats succeed in taking the House, progressive committee chairs like George Miller and Barney Frank can begin that bigger conversation through hearings, investigations and legislative battles. The AFL-CIO is leading an effort to develop a broader economic alternative to the failed conservative agenda.

In 2006, however, voters looking for answers on the economy will have a hard time finding them. Headlines from Iraq and the din of the war debate drown out economic issues. Republican incumbents are advertising their new-found independence from the President, blurring differences and going negative, often in direct personal attacks on their opponents. Neither party is offering voters a strategy for dealing with the growing structural insecurities of today's economy. Neither rouses the country to a new vision of a more just, more prosperous society.

But beneath the clamor, there will at least be a clear choice between the two parties. Democrats promise to reverse the costs of Republican corruption. Republicans promise to stop Democrats from raising your taxes. Both appeal to your pocketbook. Democrats will rely on the growing sense that it is time to throw the bums out. Republicans will stoke fears that change will lead to something worse. No wonder turnout is likely to be low. ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

Kawasaki, Japan

■ I was surprised that you did not discuss crop patenting and single-season seeds. Industrialized farms are commonly planted with patented single-season seeds incapable of producing viable seeds. We are becoming dependent upon infertile crops controlled by industry, which is actually eliminating and/or prohibiting the use of natural seeds. These industries show their good will by "donating" their seeds to Third World countries (replacing replenishable crops with ones that must be corporately replenished). The systematic replacement of the world's edible vegetation with nonpollenating plants is horrifying. TERRE THAEMLITZ

New York City

■ The Food Issue documents the emerging movement for food justice and against corporate control of our diet. Similar mobilizing is going on against global tobacco, alcohol, automobile, firearms and pharmaceutical industries, which also profit from products that damage health and the environment. Defining a common agenda and building coalitions among these groups of activists, workers, consumers, health professionals and victims, has the potential to revitalize a progressive movement for social justice, health, environmental protection and democracy. NICHOLAS FREUDENBERG

Broken Arrow, Okla.

■ In our ancient languages "God," "good" and "food" had the same mother. Happiness means I have food. Our government's unholy alliances with the polluters and profiteers is destroying the garden given us to tend. The latest example, promoted by the food conglomerates and headed to the Senate, is the National Uniformity for Food Act. It says that local food laws cannot be stricter on food purity and safety than the watered-down federal law, which violates more than 200 local requirements. It attacks small farmers wanting to produce better, safer and more nutritious food. J. RAY HUNT

Belgium, Wisc.

■ The decline of our food quality coincided with the pitting of farmers against one another for the bottom of the price barrel. As in industry, government favors centralization, consolidation and regulation of ag production. The biggest influence on consolidation is the income tax code, which favors large corporations run by accountants who know the loopholes and the lobbies. One solution is to pass the Fair Tax bill, already in Congress. DANIEL CONINE

Kansas City, Mo.

■ In the fullness of its supercentenarian wisdom, *The Nation* has presented a model symposium on conscientious gastronomy. Until proven wrong I shall dare to regard the moment as a signal event in the long course of Brillat's vindication and to hope that (all other approaches having failed) the way to men's minds runs through their stomachs. DAVID DUNLAP

Minneapolis

■ We get pasteurized milk rather than raw milk, which is twenty times better, so I made up this poem: I'm Lester, 96 years old
Grew up on a farm.
Had learned to face the heat & cold
Thought raw milk could do no harm.
Hauled out loads of cow manure
But what to do about Pasteur?
LESTER SCHERFENBERG

CORRECTION

■ In Richard J. Whalen's "Revolt of the Generals" last week, the retired officer who said, "We're not the French generals in Algeria. But we damned well know that the Iraq War we've won militarily is being lost politically" was Army Maj. Gen. Paul Eaton, not Marine Lieut. Gen. Gregory Newbold. The author regrets the error.

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Not the President's Men

JOHN POWERS

THE GREATEST STORY EVER SOLD: The Decline and Fall of Truth From 9/11 to Katrina.
By Frank Rich.
Penguin Press. 341 pp. $25.95.

"ALL GOVERNMENTS LIE!": The Life and Times of Rebel Journalist I.F. Stone.
By Myra MacPherson.
Scribner. 564 pp. $35.

THE BEST OF I.F. STONE.
Edited by Karl Weber.
PublicAffairs. 350 pp. $23.95.

Back when Arnold Schwarzenegger was pushing some California ballot initiatives that even he didn't really give a damn about, the *New York Times* ran a story about how he promoted his political agenda the same way he always sold the latest *Terminator*. While the piece itself was old hat, Duh Gubna was in beaming good humor, delighted to share his tricks—how he trained himself to appear "real" in public, always stayed on message and wasn't afraid to repeat the exact same phrases every time. "I come from the world of reps," he explained with the sinewy assurance one expects of the Austrian Oak. "Remember that. It is all reps."

Is it ever. Today's media politics is all about saying the same few things over and over until they come to seem inevitable, even if—especially if—they're not true. Naturally, such systematic lying is hardly new. Nor is the media's ingrained habit of regurgitating these lies as news, then getting huffy when Stephen Colbert points it out during your cozy banquet with liars. But in an age when manufactured myths flood the increasingly corporatized airwaves—and the hardest-hitting newscaster, Keith Olbermann, made his name cracking wise on ESPN—it seems ever harder to tell the public something real.

This struggle to do so lies at the heart of two very different new books. One was written by a comfortably situated liberal columnist, the *New York Times*'s Frank Rich; the other, Myra MacPherson's biography of the radical investigative journalist I.F. Stone, tells the still-heartening tale of a self-described Jeffersonian Marxist whose own not inconsiderable taste for punditry ultimately required him to build his own soapbox. The two journalists embody different approaches to telling truth to power.

With *The Greatest Story Ever Sold: The Decline and Fall of Truth From 9/11 to Katrina*, Rich becomes the third *Times* columnist to turn disdain for the Bush presidency into a highly publicized book. Surely this must be the most progressive newspaper on the planet!

Now, it's tempting to view Rich with skepticism or envy. For starters, he works at the *Times*, a newspaper destined to outrage the right while leaving its natural, left-of-center audience bitterly disappointed at the timid sobriety of a liberalism that gets assertive only *after* the United States invades Iraq. Then, too, Rich inhabits the op-ed page, the Park Avenue of punditry. I don't know a journalist who wouldn't leap to claim one of those columns, with its high international profile, extraordinary access (almost every big shot will return your calls) and near papal sense of its importance. Even as you're churning out the most received of ideas, you can believe they're somehow newly minted just by virtue of their appearing in the *Times*. How else could David Brooks solemnly announce—this decade, let alone this year—that tattoos aren't really nonconformist?

Like so many of today's pundits, Rich did not start out as a political reporter, but unlike most, he didn't even have much of a

John Powers is film critic at Vogue, *writes the "On" column for* LA Weekly *and is critic at large for National Public Radio's* Fresh Air With Terry Gross. *He is the author of* Sore Winners (and the Rest of Us) in George Bush's America *(Doubleday).*

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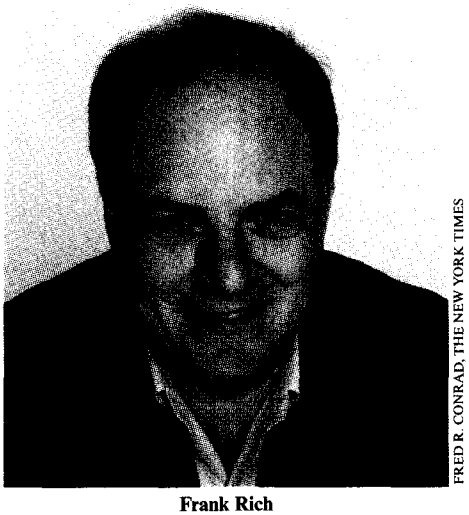
political background, unless being a Beltway baby and Harvard grad count. He made his name as a drama critic, the Butcher of Broadway, and when his column first appeared, he took a lot of grief for actually bringing something fresh to American newspapers—a recognition of the interplay between popular culture and public life, which is where so much of American politics actually happens. Rich wrote less about events than about the *perception* of events, the meta-media madness that fills our heads. Perhaps because his prose often exudes the earnest, leaden-joke complacency of one who channels (and is worshiped on) the Upper West Side, many people initially dismissed him as a flyweight. He was bad-mouthed by hard-core political types who foolishly thought ana-



FRED R. CONRAD, THE NEW YORK TIMES

Frank Rich

lyzing pop culture is frivolous, and tweaked by arts critics who assumed that, naturally, they could do the job better. And some might have. Those early columns could be labored and tinny.

But over the years, Rich's political writing has sharpened. Unlike Dowd (does she ever leave her apartment or phone anybody outside the *Times*?), he isn't lazy. Reading his densely packed double-sized columns, you can see the man sweat. And since the beginning of the Bush years, his Sunday pieces have been some of the strongest things in the *Times*—as strong as those by snappish Paul Krugman, who vainglariously seems to think he's all alone out there in op-ed no man's land. Rich is not vacuously jokey like Dowd, not boringly honorable like Bob Herbert, not flatly self-promoting like Thomas Friedman or Nicholas Kristof (who has morphed into liberalism's Steve Irwin, protecting endangered Darfurians and Asian sex slaves while making sure the video camera celebrates his derring-do). In fact, back when Krugman and Friedman 4.0 (as we call him round my house) were still fighting for the soul of Maureen, a late arrival at the Bush Bashers' Ball, it was Rich who, each Sunday, captured the texture of what people were talking about. He lucidly dissected the Administration's latest lies, sideshows and photo-ops—some of the very work I.F. Stone used to perform. Although Rich doesn't do passion, his column took on a real urgency.

Now comes *The Greatest Story Ever Sold*, and though it's a letdown, you can still see him sweating. To his credit, this is a proper book, not a lazy recycle bin for old columns, like Dowd's *Bushworld* or Krugman's *The Great Unraveling*. While it's partly cobbled together from earlier work, he clearly wants it to be more than just a collection of opinions (although his crushing verdict on the Bush Administration colors every line). No doubt thinking legacy, he wants it to have some gravitas, some heft.

On the book's second page, Rich alludes to Colbert's celebrated notion of "truthiness"—in which emotional plausibility trumps demonstrable fact. This led me to think Rich might explore one of the most deliciously ironic twists of contemporary culture: After years of shrieking about postmodern relativism in the modern university, especially its literature departments, today's conservatives now embrace the same thing when it comes to politics. Talk about breaking the connection between signifiers and referents. With his disdain for "reality-based" behavior, Karl Rove makes Jacques Derrida seem as stodgy as Andy Rooney.

But rather than set off on such conceptual flights—this is distinctly *not* a book of ideas—Rich takes a steadfastly prosaic approach. Weaving together the whats and whens of previously reported stories, he painstakingly describes the Bush Administration's constant mangling of the truth between September 11, 2001, and "Heckuva job, Brownie," even offering a handy seventy-eight-page timeline compiled by his crack researcher Joel Topcik. At times this narrative is arresting, albeit in a perversely nostalgic way: I was happy to be reminded of such foul propaganda flourishes as the trumped-up Ramboism of Jessica Lynch or the mythologized friendly-fire death of Pat Tillman.

Still, as I know firsthand, such pop moments never burn brighter than in a column (where Rich handled them splendidly). Strung together in a book such events quickly feel stale, ephemeral; tweaking "Mission Accomplished" is a mission long since accomplished. Indeed, anyone likely to read this book can already recite the long list of Administration malfeasances like fans at a Neil Diamond concert singing along with "Sweet Caroline." For those of us who love hating Bush-spin, there's nothing here as juicy and new as Thomas Ricks's tale in *Fiasco* about that splendid Baghdad afternoon in the summer of 2003 when select prowar reporters, including the Rich Man's Orwell, listened to Paul Wolfowitz hail the Coalition's astounding progress—as they sat safely ensconced in the Green Zone eating lamb off a banquet table lit by candelabras.

Oddly for a onetime reviewer, Rich gets so caught up in Bush's shock-and-awe showbiz that he doesn't spend enough time explaining why it worked—why this particular spin spun so well. He can't tell us how the Administration came up with its precise PR moves, why Richard Clarke's gripping (and widely seen) TV appearances produced so little traction or what made the public buy into (if it did) the Swiftboating of John Kerry. Too often,

CELIA GILBERT

I.F. Stone

detailed analysis is replaced by the sociological shorthand that, as I know from my own weakness for such generalizations, is the crystal meth of the culture-crit business. Is it really true to say that "during the 1990s boom, the citizenry had become addicted to instant gratification"? Is Rich describing himself here? (If so, I'd love to hear about it.) Is he talking about readers of those *Times* articles about $20,000 settees? Or is he referring to some supposed horde of ADD people out there bedazzled by Hummers and Ann Coulter's *Girls Gone Wild* conservatism?

Even the treatment of pop culture feels pro forma. I kept wanting Rich to cut loose, to riff on why, for instance, Tillman's story proved such an effective piece of demagogic mythology (literal brotherhood, ideas of masculinity, modern football as high-tech

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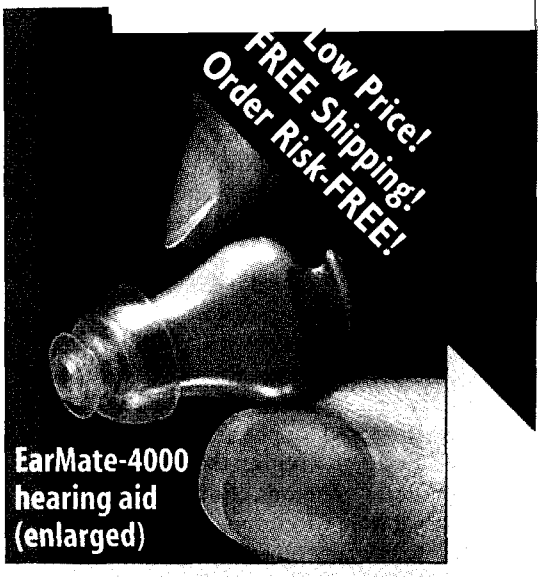

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combat) or why this particular player (a guy who craved contact and thought in absolutes) would be the perfect gladiator for a so-called "war on terror." While it may be true that Philip Roth's *The Plot Against America* is "the best early take on the forty-third president," I wanted Rich to at least notice that the novel's villain, Charles Lindbergh, is the one who opposes fighting Fascism overseas but promises an isolationist homeland security. This is exactly the opposite of Bush, who, Rich provocatively but unconvincingly argues, was led by Rove into toppling Saddam as a way of winning the 2002 midterm elections. But once they'd won, why invade?

Like many other books appalled by media coverage of Bush, *The Greatest Story Ever Sold* rightly knocks Bob Woodward for prizing his sources so highly that he treats them with kid gloves. This makes it all the more disappointing that Rich, who doesn't depend on such sources, is himself so cautious about the paper of record's role in the decline and fall of truth. He slams Judith Miller for her lousy WMD-scare reporting, but heck, she's already been cut loose. I kept waiting for the necessary dissection of his stablemate Friedman, the country's most vaunted foreign policy columnist, whose liberal-hawk cheerleading provided Bush & Co. with invaluable ideological cover—he helped them sell their story. True, Rich shows us the *Times*'s public editor smacking the editors for giving Miller's stories front-page play while more nuanced, questioning articles were "interred on Page B10." But this book should be giving us Rich's inside analysis of exactly how that happened at the place where he's been working for the last quarter-century. Why didn't he go upstairs, do some reporting and give us something new? After all, he seems uniquely situated to provide such firsthand knowledge. He's one of the Gray Lady's fair-haired boys. It's not for nothing that *The Greatest Story Ever Sold* received a gaudy cover review in the *Times Book Review*.

Of course, merely to say this is to understand Rich's unwillingness to pounce on Friedman or anatomize why the *Times* covered Iraq so feebly when it made a real difference. He's pleasurably ensconced in a powerful institution that not only pays him handsomely but makes him a national figure. (Lest I appear to be on a high horse, let me add that I don't bite the hand that cuts my checks either, except in those happy cases when a sharp nip will let us all revel in our own integrity.) Unlike far too many of his colleagues, Rich is shrewd enough to know that if his work ran in, say, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and not the *Times*, he'd be no better known than... whoever the columnists are there. His power actually belongs to his spot on Pundit Park Avenue.

Nobody would ever say such a thing about I.F. Stone. This was a journalist who claimed his own power and then got others to see it—even if it meant raising hackles. Not exactly crippled by self-consciousness, the prickly, independent Stone spent his life assailing powerful Tailgunners and J. Edgars who strove to ruin him, fighting with bosses he didn't like and bosses he did, pissing off friends and colleagues with criticisms and then playing dumb when they were wounded. Because he's now canonized as the left-wing hero "Izzy" Stone—his greatness accepted by the mainstream, though denied by right-wing mouthbreathers—it's easy to forget he spent years in the wilderness of an Eisenhower-era Washington where conformity was not just king but bling.

It's easy to forget that Stone spent years in the wilderness of an Eisenhower-era Washington where conformity was not just king but bling.

Stone's whole life was a peculiarly American story of self-creation—*Rocky* for left-wing intellectuals. In her fine and useful new biography *"All Governments Lie!": The Life and Times of Rebel Journalist I.F. Stone*, veteran reporter Myra MacPherson traces in perhaps excessive detail the triumphant arc of the man she too often calls "Izzy."

Born Isadore Feinstein, the diminutive, unprepossessing son of immigrants—"I look like a Jewish bullfrog," he once cracked—Stone lived the kind of purpose-driven life most journalists (and ministers) can only dream of. Although he seemingly emerged from the womb reading Gibbon, he was too interested in the world ever to thrive in academe (although he was haunted by his rejection from Harvard). After dropping out of the University of Pennsylvania, he plunged into a full-time journalistic career that, during the 1930s and '40s, took him from the *Philadelphia Record* to the *New York Post* (where he became a feisty, and well-paid, editorialist) to *The Nation* to the progressive paper *PM*. Along the way, he changed his name to sound less Jewish—for solid political reasons. He quit the National Press Club when it wouldn't serve his black guest, the dean of Howard Law School—this in 1941. And he made a celebrated (and illegal) journey to the Middle East in the 1940s with the Zionist underground—then infuriated American Jews two decades later by suggesting a binational solution in Israel/Palestine.

This alone would make for a whopping résumé, yet in a sense it was merely preparation for his life's defining achievement. Inspired by the model of George Seldes's *In Fact*, he launched his own paper, *I.F. Stone's Weekly*, in January 1953, boasting such early subscribers as Bertrand Russell, Eleanor Roosevelt and Albert Einstein. (J. Edgar Hoover read it compulsively, in order to be outraged—he downed Stone's words like Red Bull.) Even as Stone fought deafness and failing eyesight, his *Weekly* ran the most original and iconoclastic pieces on the Korean War, outstripped the likes of Edward R. Murrow in unmasking what he called the "McCarthy-Hoover Axis" and pounded Eisenhower and Kennedy for their feebleness on civil rights. During the heyday of the New Left (which he supported though it made him nervous), he was transformed from an iconoclast into an icon.

By the time Stone closed shop in December 1971, his maverick muckraking had also made him rich; and though he kept writing (even about ancient Greece), he began a victory lap that lasted nearly as long as the run of the *Weekly*. No ascetic, Stone took voluminous pleasure in being lionized; he adored being the one true embodiment of First Amendment freedom. (As with so many outsiders, he secretly craved the insiders' approval.) Although you couldn't blame him, there was something slightly nauseating about watching such a bold soul be appropriated for the greater glory of an American journalism renowned for being gutless. Mainstream media folks embraced "Izzy" as if he was somehow one of them, when his glory was that he'd spent years refusing to be.

Rather than rely on inside contacts—whose favor must be curried, even at the cost of printing the truth—Stone steered clear of the power loop. Instead, he scanned news articles for revealing lacunas and unspoken patterns; he pored over government documents ("Read them back to front," he taught his acolytes) in search of the one glittering revelation buried in all the bureaucratic lard. MacPherson pointedly puts Stone's career next to that of insider columnist Walter Lippmann, who for decades pulled more cultural weight than Rich, Friedman, Krugman and Dowd yoked together. Seduced by the journalist's deadliest illusion—the belief that you can bend the

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ear of the powerful—the fastidious Lippmann now seems less a titan than a cautionary tale, a second-string Raymond Aron still renowned for helping define the vanished American Century but irrelevant today—a fascinating exhibit in *Jurassic Park*'s media concourse. In contrast, Stone's style and methods (if not all his opinions) make him our contemporary.

MacPherson's biography shows just how central the historical crucible of the early twentieth century was in forming Stone's flinty left-wing values—values not much rarer in his era than Rich's sensible liberalism is now. What's rare is that Stone didn't lose them. Indeed, at times they could leave him blinkered, could cause him to make what he called "mistakes of the heart." Nowhere was this clearer than in his perception of the Soviet Union, and it's one of MacPherson's virtues that she's clear about the nature of his fellow-traveling.

Regrettably, she's forced to spend time defending Stone (yet again) against the scurrilous charge that he was on the Soviet payroll. He wasn't—case closed—and the only people who still say so are poisonous right-wing ideologues who haven't spent much time grousing about those anti-Castro reporters cashing government checks in Miami. MacPherson makes it clear that Stone's true failing was his tardiness in grasping the full monstrosity of actually existing Communism, especially Stalinism. The tiger eyes that could spot the threat to liberty in the footnotes of a Congressional report couldn't clearly see the meaning of show trials, slave labor and class-based mass murder. To fault him for this isn't redbaiting or Monday morning quarterbacking. If I'd been young in those days—when choosing sides was a moral imperative—I probably would have made the same errors. But good intentions aren't everything, and these were enormous errors. Faced with one of the most tyrannical political regimes of his lifetime, he got things so badly wrong that another man might have died questioning his own judgment.

But Stone was not a self-doubter. Nor does MacPherson pretend that he was always a joy to be around. Sure, he could brim with *joie de vivre*, doing "The Hustle" with his beloved wife, Esther, into their 60s. But he also bristled with the sheer cussedness that, experience suggests, is one of the main professional tools of the successful maverick journalist. He was a demanding (if doting) husband and an often difficult father—the whole house hustled to his rhythms—and he was not above arrogant

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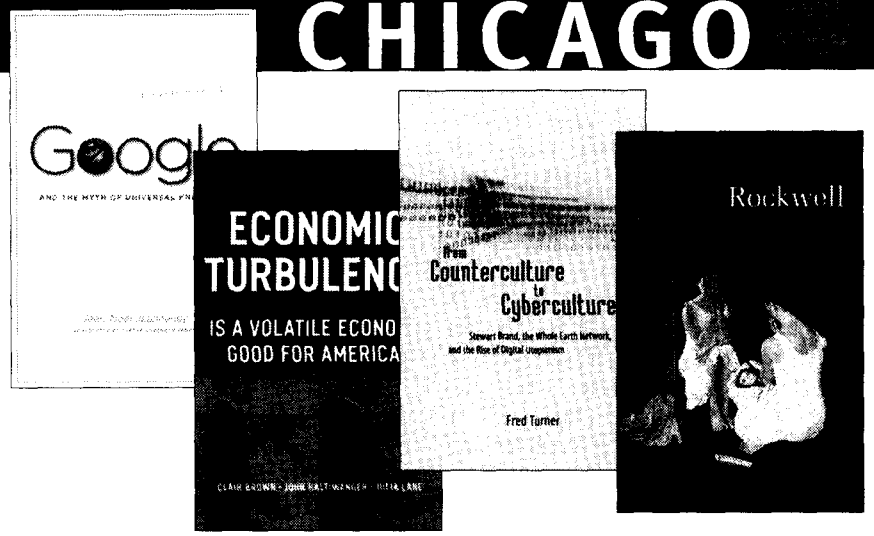

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self-righteousness. He didn't easily brook disagreement, and like many such men, he found plenty of fools not to suffer.

No matter. "Izzy" Stone was a brilliant journalist, and one of the happy benefits of reading *"All Governments Lie!"* was that it got me dipping back into pieces I hadn't read for years. While there's not a single duff entry in the essential new collection *The Best of I.F. Stone*, he doesn't need to be cherry-picked. Just open *The Haunted Fifties* at random and you'll discover something worthwhile on almost every page. Here he's tweaking the *New York Times* for burying Hoover's shocking words of praise for Joe McCarthy's character. There he's pondering the dark notion that humanity may not deserve a future of satellites and sky platforms: "It might be better, after all, if space were left to a newer species, bred to live in peace and to take joy in diversity. Our first reactions, like all our past, show how unfit men are for the heavens. We would only stain red the Milky Way."

Reading all this, I realized that were he working today, Stone would be the greatest blogger who ever lived. Not only would the guy be indefatigable—linking everything crucial—he wouldn't be content with commenting on other people's work the way nearly all our bloggers do (yes, I know there are exceptions). He'd escape the meta-media hothouse by going out and reporting—uncovering new facts that other people could link and comment on. And he'd tie all this together with a rich sense of how such facts fit in to the way people actually live, beyond ephemeral pop moments. "He had a genius for reading documents," Murray Kempton told MacPherson, "but he also had this great gift of historical imagination."

This imagination was fueled by passion, by a driving conviction, far less common these days, that what he did mattered—profoundly. This wasn't sheer egotism, although that figured in. Stone sincerely believed that the whole world hinges on how we conduct our politics, and that belief meant that every uncovered lie, every article about Vietnam, every single edition of the *Weekly* belonged to the epic struggle to create a better world. And not just better in the dinky ways you often read about in DLC white papers or liberal blogs, where restoring a Democratic Congress often marks the far horizon.

A natural-born radical, not a gaga utopian or modest meliorist, Stone was a man of hope who never shied away from the biggest of pictures—or the biggest of arguments. Back in the heyday of a liberalism that took pride in being tough and muscular, he was exposing the media's war machinery in terms that couldn't be more timely. When a 1961 *Life* magazine headline claimed that ninety-seven of 100 Americans could survive a nuclear war, he asked readers, "Just as Ivory Soap is sold as 99 percent pure, is thermonuclear war to be sold as 97 percent safe?"

Wouldn't you love to see what I.F. Stone would have written about the greatest story ever sold? ■

America, Through a Glass Darkly

JON WIENER

RICHARD HOFSTADTER: An Intellectual Biography.
By David S. Brown. Chicago. 291 pp. $27.50.

David Brown's biography of Richard Hofstadter has attracted an unusual amount of attention for a revised dissertation, riding the wave of nostalgia that surrounds the Pulitzer Prize–winning historian and liberal icon of the 1950s and '60s. At the *New York Times Book Review*, the book was the subject of the longest review of the year, and one of the most admiring, written by the editor himself, Sam Tanenhaus, who declared Hofstadter "more relevant than ever." *The New Republic* ran an even longer piece by Bancroft Prize winner Sean Wilentz about Hofstadter's "enormous mystique today." That mystique reflects a deeper nostalgia for a time when historians who addressed the political issues of the day (among them Hofstadter, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and C. Vann Woodward) had immense intellectual authority and a wide readership, a time when essays written with style and grace were honored and a time when writing about great white men did not make you look obsolete or reactionary.

The Hofstadter nostalgia boom is also fueled by readers who find in his work a foreshadowing of their own anxiety about the irrationality of populist movements. His feeling that populism posed a danger to democracy seems to liberals and conservatives alike to speak to our own time—as indeed in many ways it does. Many writers seeking to understand the 2004 "red state" phenomenon turned to Hofstadter's essays on "status anxiety" and "the paranoid style in American politics"—especially after George W. Bush mobilized his supporters with a good-old-boy rhetoric that was proudly stupid.

There's no question that Hofstadter's writing was wonderful. But his understanding of the American past now seems narrow and flawed, and marked, inevitably, by the preoccupations of a generation that lived through Hitler and Stalin, by a gnawing anxiety that some kind of American fascism, a vicious right-wing movement coming out of the heartland, was not only possible but likely. (Such anxiety has not, to be sure, entirely dissipated among American liberals; early next year journalist Chris Hedges is publishing a book, *American Fascists*, about the Christian right.)

Hofstadter died in 1970, just as a new generation of historians was transforming the profession by turning away from the study of elites. Inspired by British historians of the working class like E.P. Thompson, and by American New Left historians like Herbert Gutman, they began exploring, and celebrating, how history was made by ordinary Americans: by working-class immigrants in the tenements, the taverns and the factories, and by African-Americans and other oppressed groups. This "history from below" represented a defiant challenge to Hofstadter's kind of history.

But if Hofstadter seems newly relevant today, it's not for the reasons imagined by Tanenhaus and others. Despite his fame and success, he was always more of an outsider than his establishment admirers have understood. He disdained the 1950s celebration of consensus; he was deeply skeptical of the liberal heroes, especially FDR; he was never much of an anti-Communist; and when the student antiwar movement excoriated the hypocrisies and failures of the universities, Hofstadter, virtually alone among his entire cohort, refused to condemn the students and agreed with them

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on some key issues, even as he rejected their militant tactics. Thus while Hofstadter was in some ways a predictable member of his generation, in others he was politically more complicated and intellectually more surprising. It is these elements, rather than his particular arguments, that make him significant for us today.

Hofstadter was born in Buffalo in 1916 and came of age in the era of the Popular Front. He went to college at the University of Buffalo and became president of his university's chapter of the National Student League, a Communist-led antiwar organization that, according to a government report quoted by Brown, "attempted physical disruption of campus activities which led to arrest, suspensions and expulsions of its members" (foreshadowing his students at Columbia in '68). In his early twenties, he went to Mississippi with his passionate left-wing wife, Felice Swados, and visited black sharecroppers at Delta Cooperative, the subject of a famous series of photographs by Dorothea Lange for the Farm Security Administration. His 1938 master's thesis at Columbia was a fierce indictment of the New Deal's Agricultural Adjustment Act for supporting Southern planters rather than poor farmers.

The Spanish Civil War was raging during his graduate school days, and in October 1938 he responded, as many of his peers did, by joining the Communist Party—in his case, the CP unit at Columbia. "My fundamental reason for joining," he wrote his brother-in-law, "is that I don't like capitalism and want to get rid of it.... I join without enthusiasm but with a sense of obligation." (Brown does not quote the letter, which Eric Foner cites in a chapter on Hofstadter in his book *Who Owns History?*) Four months later, in February 1939, he quit the party. His reason, according to fellow student Kenneth Stampp (who later achieved renown with his history of slavery, *The Peculiar Institution*): "He couldn't stand the people." But even after that, in October 1939, he wrote his brother-in-law (in another letter not quoted by Brown): "I hate capitalism and everything that goes with it." In 1941 he got his first full-time job, directly as a result of anti-Communism: He replaced a faculty member forced out by City College because of alleged Communist Party ties: Jack Foner, father of Eric. (Eric would later fill the same chair at Columbia that Hofstadter had held. You might call that the irony of history.) Three years later Hofstadter published his first book, a blistering exposé of capitalist ideology, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*.

The turning point for Hofstadter was 1945: That year Felice died of cancer, depriving him of the most important leftist connection in his life, and Columbia hired him. He was 30 years old. The transformation from 1930s radical activist to 1950s liberal intellectual was under way.

The American Political Tradition, published in 1948 and widely regarded as Hofstadter's best book, is still selling briskly almost sixty years later: Recently it had an Amazon ranking of 4,400, which would be envied by most historians with books on the market today. (Brown's, for example, was at 22,000 on the same day.) Knopf's 1948 publicity marketed the book as a work of consensus history: "In this age of political extremism, this young and brilliant Columbia historian searches out the common ground among all American parties and factions." In fact the book was more subtle, and much more interesting, than that. Hofstadter wrote the book from a vantage point on the left. While others, like Daniel Boorstin, celebrated consensus, Hofstadter was openly critical. It opens with a description of an "increasingly passive and spectatorial" state of mind in postwar America, a country dominated by "corporate monopoly," its citizens "bereft of a coherent and plausible body of belief" and adrift in a "rudderless and demoralized state."

The book consists of twelve biographical portraits of key American political figures, ranging from the slaveholder John Calhoun to the abolitionist Wendell Phillips, from the free-market Republican Herbert Hoover to the welfare-state Democrat FDR, from Jefferson the patrician to Andrew Jackson the common man. Hofstadter's thesis was that all shared fundamental assumptions about the goodness of private property and the value of "progress." The archaic assumptions of *The American Political Tradition* are all too evident today. Hofstadter believed he was studying something called "the American mind" when he profiled American Presidents, and that their stories and those of other elite white men were representative of our political tradition. But while presidential biography may be of limited value—to the study, albeit not the marketing, of American history—several of Hofstadter's essays in *The American Political Tradition* remain compelling works of the genre that have seldom been surpassed.

The contrast with recent presidential biographies, like David McCullough's hagiographic book on Truman, could hardly be more stark. Hofstadter's gaze was in-

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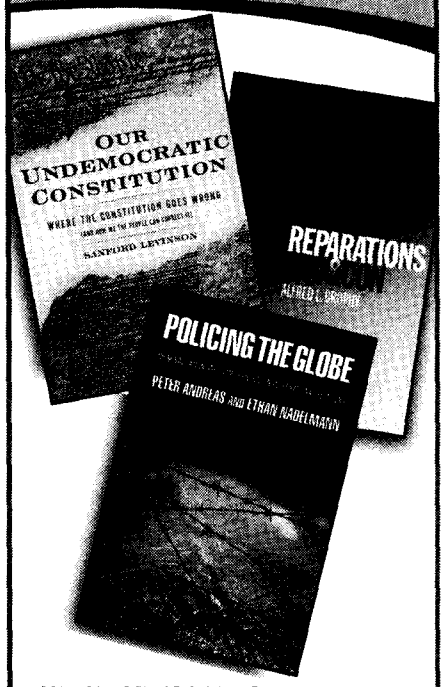

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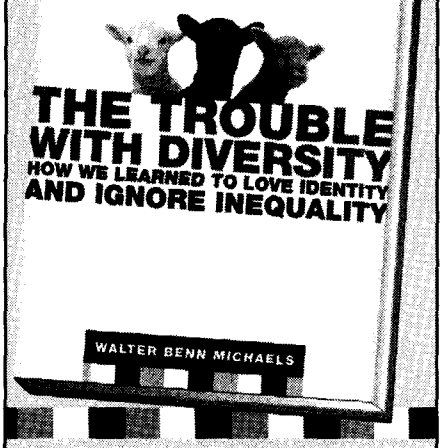

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tensely skeptical, especially when it was trained on *the* liberal icon of his own time, FDR: Hofstadter's chapter on him is titled "the patrician as opportunist." He objected to the portrait of Lincoln as a Christ-like figure who died for the sin of slavery, depicting him instead as the master of his own myth and as a canny politician, especially on the question of abolition. The Wendell Phillips chapter remains a revelation—even today, when the left famously dominates academia, who would have the chutzpah to put this abolitionist and socialist on the same plane as Jefferson, Lincoln and FDR? Here we see most clearly the traces of the radical sensibility of Hofstadter's youth. The essay is unique in its frank admiration for a voice of "resistance and rebellion," a champion of the oppressed whose refusal to compromise "forced him into a deeper and deeper isolation" as Reconstruction gave way to the Gilded Age. The chapter ends with an elderly Phillips invited to speak at Harvard, and taking the occasion not to heal the breach with his mainstream critics but rather to indict the assembled scholars for their moral cowardice. Hofstadter's admiration for this stance is unmistakable.

The American consensus that Hofstadter bemoaned in *The American Political Tradition* was turning more aggressive and suspicious the year the book was published, as redbaiting spread across America. Hofstadter refused an invitation to teach at Berkeley in 1950 because he opposed the loyalty oath imposed by the University of California Regents, but he also refused to condemn the firing of Communists at the University of Washington in 1949. His position was the mainstream liberal one: Communists opposed freedom, so they should be denied teaching jobs. This is problematic for his biographer, because Hofstadter himself had joined the Party as a student, and other people who had done the same, like Daniel Boorstin, were being subpoenaed, asked to name names and fired if they refused (Boorstin named his Harvard college roommates). The late James Shenton, a colleague of Hofstadter's at Columbia, told Brown that Hofstadter did not take a stand against firing Communists because "Dick was afraid at the time." It's still a mystery why Hofstadter was never subpoenaed—Brown sheds no light on that crucial question, although others speculate that the FBI may have missed him because he had been a Party member for all of four months.

McCarthyism loomed large in the background of Hofstadter's next book, *The Age of Reform*, published in 1955. There, Hofstadter searched the past for the roots of the "conspiracy theory" and "paranoid tendencies" that he saw in popular anti-Communism. The book won Hofstadter his first Pulitzer and remains, in Alan Brinkley's words, "the most influential book ever published on the history of twentieth-century America." The book's most enduring contribution, Sean Wilentz rightly argues, is its re-interpretation of the New Deal, not as part of the nineteenth-century reform tradition in America, as most historians saw it, but rather as an "outrageous departure" from it. The old reformers ended up with prohibition as their great achievement; the New Deal, by contrast, focused not on moral campaigns against evil but on pragmatic and practical aims. It eschewed ideology and focused on results—and the results included the welfare state, the Wagner Act for labor and Keynsian policy for the budget. It's still a bracing interpretation.

Hofstadter's argument that the historical roots of McCarthyism lay in the Populist tradition, on the other hand, is simply wrong. He argued that the Populist movement of the 1890s was deeply irrational and essentially proto-fascist. The Populists saw the principal source of injustice and economic suffering in rural America in what they called "the money power." In Hofstadter's analysis, this was evidence of irrational paranoia, of "psychic disturbances." Moreover, Hofstadter argued that these denunciations of "the money power" were deeply anti-Semitic. Alas, his evidence of Populist anti-Semitism was embarrassingly thin: a handful of lurid quotes from a few Populist leaders about the "House of Rothschild" and "Shylock," and an argument that Henry Ford's anti-Semitism came from his background as "a Michigan farm boy who had been liberally exposed to Populist notions."

The problem with this analysis, aside from the paucity of evidence, was that anti-Semitic rhetoric was hardly a monopoly of rural Midwestern Protestants in post–Civil War America. The Protestant elites in East Coast cities were probably more anti-Semitic, and Irish Catholic immigrants in Eastern cities had no love for Jews either. The larger problem stemmed from Hofstadter's theoretical framework. Today Hofstadter is regarded primarily as a great writer with a powerful personal vision. But he was engaged with the most advanced social science theory of his day, and he pioneered the application of theory to history—the move that many of his

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fans today consider the downfall of the profession. *The Age of Reform* was framed around the theory of "status politics," which came from an essay by German sociologist Max Weber, published in the United States by Hofstadter's Columbia colleague and friend the radical sociologist C. Wright Mills. Hofstadter's "status politics" thesis held that the Populists were driven to irrationality and paranoia by anxiety over their declining status in an America where rural life and its values were being supplanted by an urban industrial society. Populism, in this view, was a form of reactionary resistance to modernity. Here Hofstadter was the Jewish New York intellectual anxiously looking for traces of proto-fascism somewhere in middle America. He saw Joe McCarthy as a potential American Hitler and believed he had found the roots of American fascism among rural Protestants in the Midwest. It was history by analogy—but the analogy didn't work.

None of these problems escaped Hofstadter's critics at the time. In *The Nation*, William Appleman Williams argued that Hofstadter's conception of status politics defined opposition to the status quo as fundamentally irrational while the irrationalities of liberal capitalism went unexamined. In 1967 Michael Rogin published a powerful book, *The Intellectuals and McCarthy: The Radical Specter*, showing that the people who voted for McCarthy, by and large, were not former Populists but rather upper-middle-class suburban Republicans. And it was not just leftists like Williams and Rogin who questioned Hofstadter's "status politics" thesis. One of C. Vann Woodward's greatest essays, "The Populist Heritage and the Intellectual," insisted that the Populist program of the 1890s was far from irrational, that the Populists were not proto-McCarthyites, that many McCarthy supporters came from "college-bred, established-wealth, old family" sources. But if Hofstadter's argument was challenged effectively at the time, his anxiety about an American fascism stayed with him for the rest of his life.

nti-Intellectualism in American Life, the 1963 book that won Hofstadter his second Pulitzer Prize, was another attempt to identify the historical origins of what Hofstadter saw as the key threat to liberalism in his own time. The book enjoyed a revival in the Age of Reagan, and is cited today at a rate that seems to be increasing exponentially. But the book seems mistaken about the

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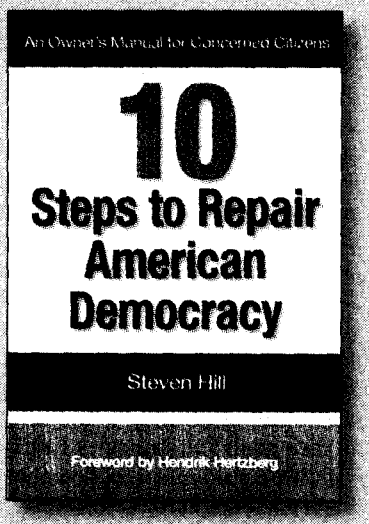

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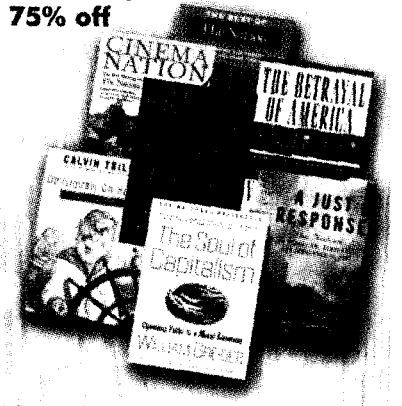

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period in which it was published. Anti-intellectualism was hardly a major problem in the United States in 1964. American intellectuals in the early '60s had never had it so good: Universities were growing as never before, Congress provided lavish funding for elite institutions and professors like Hofstadter were highly paid and won big book contracts. Popular magazines followed the hot debates among intellectuals—Daniel Bell on the "end of ideology," David Riesman on "the lonely crowd," C. Wright Mills on "the power elite," Irving Howe on "the age of conformity," C. Vann Woodward on "the strange career of Jim Crow," Michael Harrington on "the other America." As Russell Jacoby argued in *The Last Intellectuals*, the 1950s were the golden age for liberal thinkers like Hofstadter. Yet something about that era was clearly troubling him.

In the book's first chapter, "Anti-Intellectualism in Our Time," Hofstadter explained what was on his mind: the defeat of Adlai Stevenson twelve years earlier, in 1952. Hofstadter had been a passionate supporter of Stevenson, whom he described in the book as "a politician of uncommon mind." Eisenhower's victory was an "apocalypse for intellectuals"—a typically striking phrase, but wildly off-base. Stevenson was intelligent and articulate, but he was no intellectual. He wasn't even especially liberal: He backed away from Truman's call for national health-care; he supported the anti-union Taft-Hartley Act; and he was no friend of black people, choosing as his 1952 running mate Alabama Senator John Sparkman, a militant segregationist. (Hofstadter should have noticed, because he supported the civil rights movement and joined the 1965 Selma-to-Montgomery march, as Sean Wilentz recently pointed out.) When it came to Stevenson, Hofstadter's vaunted skepticism and irony evaporated.

Anti-Intellectualism was another of Hofstadter's anxious searches for the roots of American fascism, finding it this time in the evangelical Protestants of the nineteenth century and then in the fundamentalists of the 1920s. Rereading it today, that search seems misguided: McCarthyism was not essentially a movement against intellectuals. True, there were loyalty oaths for professors and purges of faculty leftists, but the anti-Communists devoted much more energy to purging Hollywood radicals and the leftist union activists—a crucial base for New Deal politics. Yes, McCarthy targeted Harvard, but he spent more time attacking the State Department and then, notoriously, the Army. And Hofstadter's conclusion that the McCarthyite anti-intellectualism of the 1950s had its origins in the evangelical Protestantism of the nineteenth century was fundamentally mistaken. Hofstadter's friend Woodward, after reading the book, wrote to him privately, "Dick, you just can't do this."

Four years later, however, some readers of *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* saw the book in a new light, against the backdrop of the 1968 student uprising at Hofstadter's Columbia. There, anti-war radicals occupied university buildings and denounced "university complicity in the war." Liberal intellectuals were horrified by the spectacle of students challenging the university, and they went so far as to liken the demonstrators to Brownshirts. They were decidedly less alarmed by Columbia's repressive response. The administration brought 1,000 cops on campus to clear the buildings; 712 students were arrested, 148 injured and nearly 400 filed police brutality complaints. Nothing like that had ever happened on an American campus, although much worse was to come at Kent State and other schools. It's not surprising that Hofstadter agreed to speak at the official Columbia commencement later that spring. Nevertheless, it's sad to picture him rising to give his speech, while forty uniformed policemen stood guard and 300 students walked out in protest to join 2,000 other people at an antiwar counter-commencement nearby.

In other ways, however, Hofstadter's response to the student uprising at Columbia in 1968 set him apart from the liberal critics who regarded the student movement as dangerously anti-intellectual. While his friends in Morningside Heights carried on about the students and saw themselves manning the barricades against the new barbarians, Hofstadter opened the door and invited his students in to talk with him about their goals and strategies. Eric Foner, one of those students, recalled that "his graduate students, many of whom were actively involved in the civil rights and anti-war movements, were having as much influence on his evolving interests and outlook as he was on theirs." Indeed, the year after Columbia '68, Hofstadter was rethinking his earlier work. He privately conceded that his critics had been right about *The Age of Reform*; in a letter he declared that the book's status thesis was (in Brown's paraphrase) "flawed and unusable" and that "nativism and anti-Semitism permeated American society in the 1890s." In another letter written the same year, he declared that his effort in *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* to explain the present had (in Brown's paraphrase) "clearly missed the mark." Here was another surprising and unusual quality: a willingness to reassess his work and find its flaws.

The most remarkable of his relationships with students after the '68 events was with his research assistant, Michael Wallace (who went on to win the 1999 Pulitzer Prize for *Gotham*, a history of New York City). In the spring of 1968, in the midst of the demonstrations, Wallace, a PhD candidate, had unlocked the door to Fayerweather Hall, the history building, so that his fellow student radicals could occupy it. A few months later, Hofstadter invited him to collaborate on a documentary history on American violence.

Thus the intellectual fruit of the trauma of '68 for Hofstadter was not a history of student radicals as Hitler Youth but rather a partnership with one of those radical students that produced a powerful exposé of American racial and class violence. In Foner's words, Hofstadter and Wallace's *American Violence: A Documentary History* "utterly contradicted the consensus vision of a nation placidly evolving without serious disagreements." This intellectual turn is the most surprising of all in the Hofstadter story. *American Violence* was the last book Hofstadter published before he died in 1970. He was only 54. (An unfinished work, *America at 1750*, was published posthumously in 1971.)

Michael Kazin recently warned against viewing Hofstadter as "an elegant ruin from a benighted age." Brown agrees, arguing that we need Hofstadter to understand the tormented politics of our time. In this view, Hofstadter may have been wrong about yesterday's Populists, but he was right about today's Republicans. The rise of George Bush is said to mark the return of status politics, because Republican majorities depend on the Evangelical Protestant "values voters" of the Midwest and South—former Populist areas! Facing economic decline, they blame their problems on the "liberal elite" and vote for prayer in schools and guns everywhere else.

That seems like a thin lesson to draw from a thick body of work. Hofstadter is worth reading in 2006 not so much because of his specific arguments but rather because of the spirit of his writing, which brings together anxieties about the dark side of American politics with a skeptical attitude toward conventional wisdom. That spirit, along with the lucidity and beauty of his prose, gives his work an enduring vitality. ■

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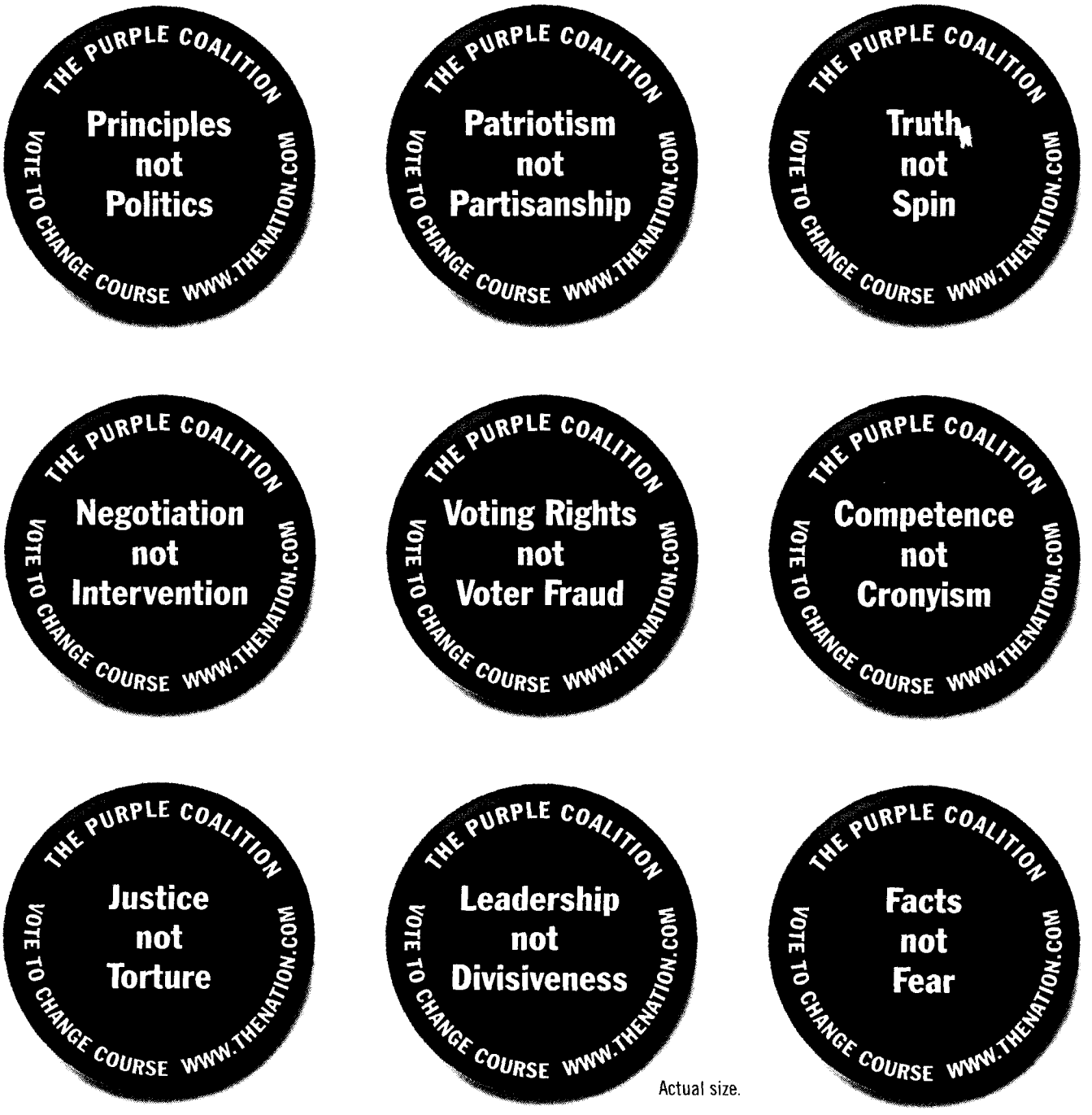

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FILMS

Down These Mean Streets

STUART KLAWANS

THE DEPARTED

Great artists do more than express emotion; they also invent it. The difference comes through most clearly when there's no subject matter to distract you—when you listen to Beethoven and Chopin, for example, or Armstrong and Coltrane, and hear how they called up ranges of feeling that were new to the world. But you can just as well experience this opening of emotional territory when you look at a Velázquez painting, or read *Dubliners*, or watch a sequence of classic filmmaking.

Here's something of the mood that Martin Scorsese invented: The Rolling Stones churn and rumble and keen on the soundtrack as the camera cruises like a vintage Chevy into a low-ceilinged urban storefront. You take in all at once an atmosphere of shadows, tribalism and menace; you sense the directorial momentum, as if the engine that drove you inside had been left running.

Scorsese introduced this feeling many years ago, in *Mean Streets*; but since then he has ventured far from the Little Italy that served as a platform for the emotion. He went to Las Vegas and Tibet, 1930s Hollywood and ancient Judea, testing and stretching himself as great artists do. In so doing, he left behind the mood that was initially so striking, and so peculiarly his. I thought it was missing even in *GoodFellas*. I hadn't expected to encounter it again.

Yet here it is once more, revived for two and a half hours nonstop in *The Departed*. You might be surprised that Irish Catholic South Boston should have provided the opportunity for this stunning return, but I tell you the range of emotions would be characteristically, authentically Scorsese's even if *The Departed* were set in Kowloon.

Which, in a sense, it is.

Sources close to the production inform me that Scorsese was initially reluctant to direct *The Departed*, since this producer-initiated project is a remake of the Hong Kong thriller *Infernal Affairs* (2002, directed by Andrew Lau and Alan Mak). Fans of *Infernal Affairs* (who are many, like the sequels) know it to be a clever, stylish, fast-moving and superficial action movie focused on the game-playing of two men who lead double lives. One, known to everyone as a police detective, works secretly for a mob boss. The other, known to everyone as a gangster, works undercover for the police. How these two deceivers chase each other through *Infernal Affairs* is far more important than anything they might feel during the pursuit. The characters' one or two moments of obligatory heartsickness do nothing to disrupt the picture's conventional sentiments of loyalty toward elders, chivalry toward women, fraternal respect toward a worthy adversary.

To Americanize this story, the producers of *The Departed* (who are also many) handed a translation of the script to screenwriter William Monahan. With considerable energy and a great trust in the power of foul-mouthed insult humor, Monahan went about transposing the events and characters to South Boston, a milieu he evidently knows something about. (I take it on faith that his grandfather was not originally a Manischewitz.) This package then went to Scorsese, who might have turned it into a mannerist exercise, like *Cape Fear*, but instead directed the movie as if every moment meant life or death, not just for the characters but for himself.

Start with the voice: a low, rattling sound, at once angry and mocking, that introduces the story of *The Departed* with a patch of seemingly omniscient narration. Later, when this frightening noise issues from an identifiable character, someone will guess that the speaker suffers from throat cancer. But nothing is truly eating this man, except the acid of his own amoral power. The voice belongs to mob boss Frank Costello (Jack Nicholson), who very soon will be a player in the drama but who for the first crucial moments of *The Departed* figures more as the *genius loci* of South Boston.

Images as ragged as the voice—shaky, fuzzy, archival—accompany his opening words, showing you the street fights that broke out in this neighborhood during the school-integration struggle of 1974. Then Costello himself steps onto the screen in devilish silhouette, a lean and stooping Spirit of South Boston, with long hair sweeping back from the forehead and a scraggly beard pointing down from the chin. Costello will prove to be an artist of sorts, a social philosopher, even a mentor; but he is first of all a man who rules by torture and murder, which leaves him looking none too clean. Like the people who attacked the school buses, he prefers his neighborhood to remain as it is: his own private hell, where "I beg your pardon?" is registered by smashing a beer stein against somebody's skull.

I must immediately deny that this representation is faithful to the lives of South Boston's good citizens. Nor do I think that Scorsese means it to be perceived as factual. Like Clint Eastwood, who turned Somerville into a surrogate Wild West town in *Mystic River*, Scorsese is working within a genre—though in this case the conventions are loose, since the director himself established them. The genre of the Scorsese picture can be open in form, as it was in *Mean Streets* (which an Italian-American friend once described to me, with fervor, as "the greatest documentary ever"); or, by contrast, it can be a closed system, as it is in *The Departed*, where the emotions and themes play out entirely within Scorseseland. You may, as a result, rate the present movie lower than *Mean Streets*; but then, understanding the nature of the game, you may also want to allow Scorsese his conceit, and Frank Costello his Mephistophelian allure.

He's the only character who's free to enjoy himself, you see, and so he stands apart from the two main protagonists. These are Costello's mole within the State Police and the State Police mole within Costello's mob—men who must never show their true feelings, and so are played, respectively, by Matt Damon and Leonardo DiCaprio. While Nicholson, the great cat-tearer, is busy tattering his every scene, Damon and DiCaprio keep their energy contained, suggesting far more than they show. Damon's chief asset here is that wide, ingenuous grin, which proves, on closer inspection, to be a cold apparatus for sifting and swallowing. Rising emotions bump against it and sink back down; lies filter through; and all the while nothing moves on Damon's face, except for a passing shadow. DiCaprio, by contrast, relies for effect on his level, hot-eyed gaze and a chronic tightness at the top of his throat. Though he, too, conceals and controls everything, he must at times

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appear to act on impulse (as when, like any credible Southie gangster, he beats the crap out of someone). Prescription drugs help him maintain the imposture; but the simultaneous expression of adrenaline and suppression of self sometimes leave this man in a state of quivering immobility.

When DiCaprio shows up, unannounced, at the door of his love interest, neither entering nor leaving, neither volunteering anything of himself nor asking openly for anything from her, she gapes at the glowering, hard-breathing figure and says, "Your vulnerability is freaking me out right now. Is it real?"

He takes a moment to consider the question, then replies, "I think so."

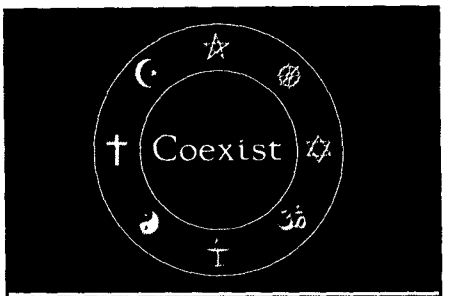
What makes *The Departed* so wrenching—far more than the tension of the plot or the abundant violence that provides its release—is the terrible honesty of this answer. The man might actually want to be vulnerable, just for a moment—he might even approach an admission of vulnerability. But by this point he's entangled so completely in lies that he doesn't know for sure, and neither do you. Few of us face situations as extreme as this character's, yet few will fail to recognize the confusion. On that level, it doesn't matter that *The Departed* is a closed system. Scorseseland is true to people's minds and hearts as we know them.

On the sociological level, though, *The Departed* does suffer from its self-enclosure. The woman to whom DiCaprio has come in his hour of need is a police psychiatrist, played with resourcefulness, valor and a vested gray suit by Vera Farmiga. Whether she deserves an Oscar nomination or the Bronze Star I can't say, but Farmiga makes what can be made of the character, who through wild coincidence (and a shocking inability to say no) winds up in bed alternately with Damon and DiCaprio. The women in *Infernal Affairs* were no stronger as characters, but at least there were two or three of them. Can there be, in all of Boston, only one woman to soak up all this suffering? The contrivance may not bring down *The Departed*, but it does expose the movie's walls as being shakier than they should be.

Matt Damon and Mark Wahlberg (as a detective sergeant) may bring genuine Boston accents to the movie; Martin Sheen (as DiCaprio's true boss) may add the weight of his Irish Catholic gravity; but this is ultimately just ornamentation, like the inconsequential subplot that worsens Costello's already unforgivable corruption. It doesn't matter that this latter complication is based on events that actually happened in Boston. *The Departed* was filmed in Massachusetts, but it is set wherever boys trade their lives for an armful of groceries, and men suffer their bones to be broken rather than risk being called fags or pussies. This is not a specific location—not anyplace capable of being documented—but it's real enough.

It's also a place that's essentially cinematic. You see that especially when the mannerist in Scorsese takes over, and he begins paying homage to *Infernal Affairs*. In one sequence, he copies (and outdoes) Lau and Mak's fast, nervous pans and multiple setups; in another, he sets the action as close as he can to Hong Kong, in Boston's Chinatown. You might even read one key event in the story as a filmmaker's allegory: A police operation fails because the technicians didn't install enough hidden cameras, leaving the director (that is to say, the officer in charge) to rage about not getting his coverage. In recent years, when Scorsese has inserted such knowing little touches into his movies, they have seemed to interest him more than the story itself. In *The Departed*, they're always absorbed into the relentless, compelling flow.

It's not just DiCaprio's character who is put into a state of trembling immobility. For the entire running time of *The Departed*, I felt adrenaline pumping through me and yet could neither fight nor flee. I could only watch, in amazement and admiration. And when the movie ended and the credits rolled, I remained stuck to my seat. I wanted a little time, before I tried walking, for my heart rate to go back down. ■



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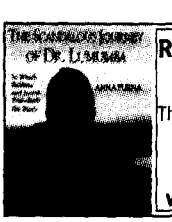
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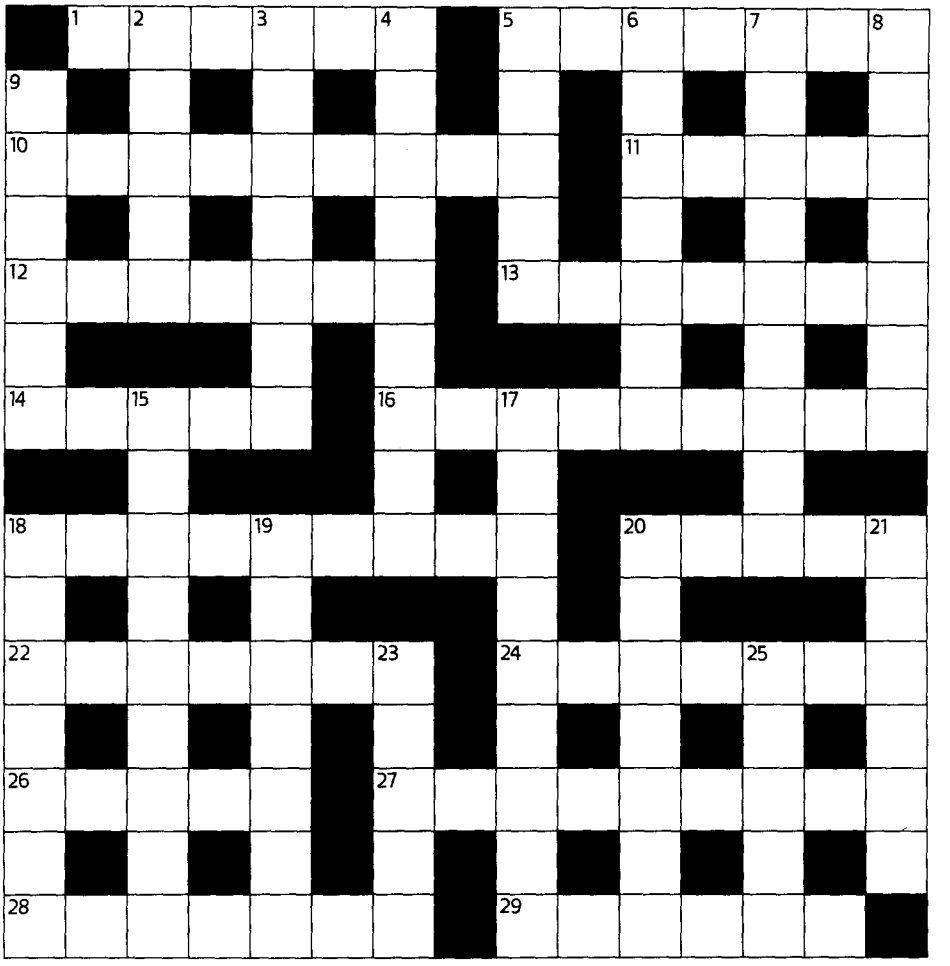

ACROSS

1 and **5** What Santa did to the list in the old song, when coming to town, could describe the loud suit. (6-7)

10 A body in old Rome clearly starts for an unattached cell. (9)

11 Proving "hoods" just have to be parts of cars. (5)

12 Game, perhaps, even with a broken toe around it, serving as a shield at one time. (7)

13 Damage the sort of icon an inventor deserves. (7)

14 and **26** You might get 20 across, if you do, to change the subject. (5,5)

16 It's rather disturbing if you don't get down with the service at table! (9)

18 A little dog to make a fuss over, always old—but one makes the little people behave! (9)

20 Storms referred to in 14 and 26. (5)

22 Sort of dear spirits, found in the canal. (7)

24 A broken leg needs the support of women—numbers are important here. (7)

26 See 14

27 It takes some time to tie things up, but in a bee this would be an easy assignment, marked "entrance" otherwise. (9)

28 Having taken a chair, chews the fat in common parlance with foreign bigshots. (7)

29 It is never recommended as a maneuver with cold iron, but workers sometimes do it. (6)

DOWN

2 The root of an alternate beginning? Rise without making the final point. (5)

3 Some look for it in a drink, with a bunch of flowers. (7)

4 Pen, possibly—pen with no sign of quiet near the old city inside it. (9)

5 The spread of an acre with a large number describing "the best!" (5)

6 Taken out of context—but no right inside. (7)

7 A subservient act when the cooking vessel is brought up, pulling something along with it. (9)

8 Making a natty appearance in an open sleigh, in the air that has many a jingle—or making a run for it. (7)

9 Duns Jock, perhaps coming to our country. (6)

15 Bring a worker into the country, which has a good deal of meaning. (9)

17 A few years back, such people could be barely seen in their antics, which were 8. (9)

18 A "soft" number moves discreetly toward what one sometimes does to declare allegiance with gifts of money to the cause. (7)

19 Possibly rue (like, with a first-class comeuppance) seeing such a large area! (7)

20 Not an unusual fighting man, breaking the rule that you need a tattered old cloth with it. (7)

21 Puts up with what the bleachers are. (6)

23 Ponders about those sister goddesses? (5)

25 Close your eyes quickly! When things are on this they won't work! (5)

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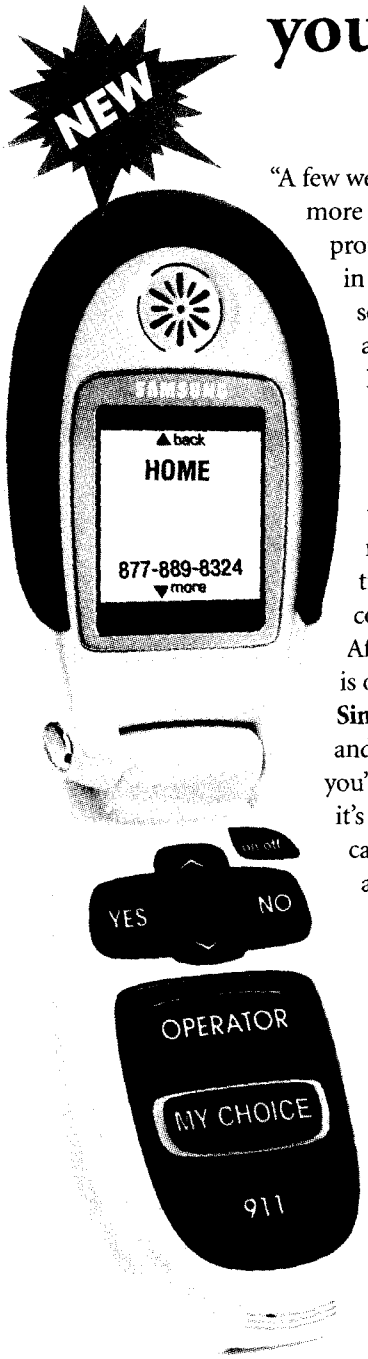

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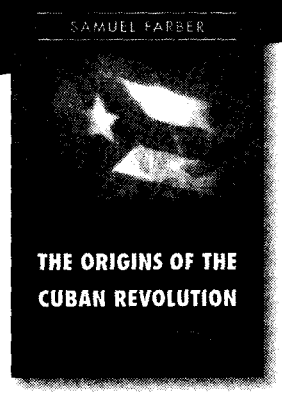

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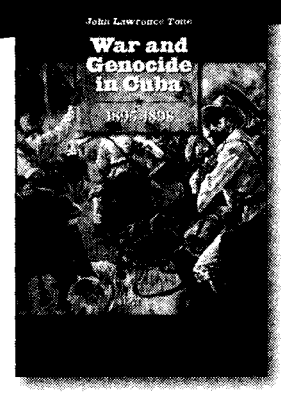

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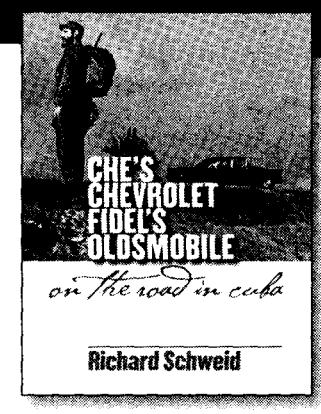

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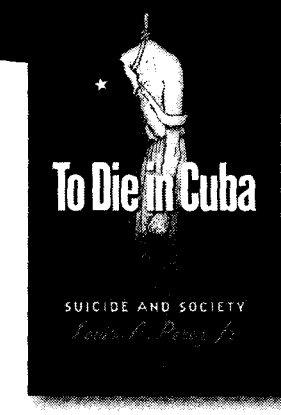

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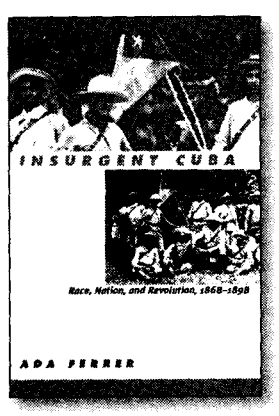

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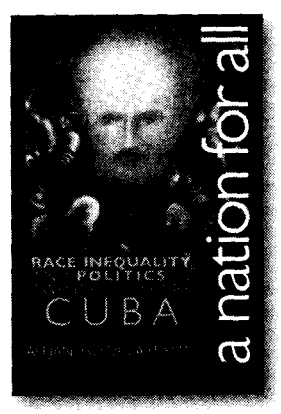

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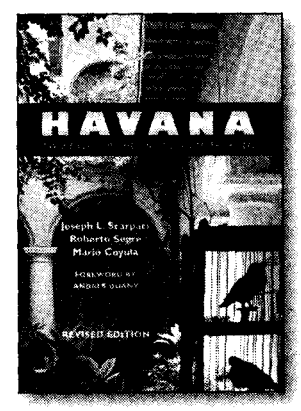

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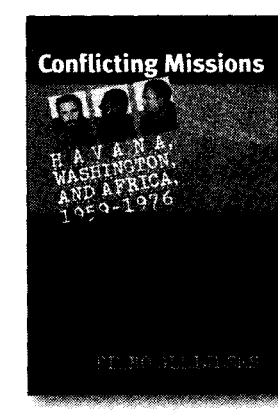

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